

Structures of Participation in the “University of Local Knowledge”

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Abstract

“Structures of Participation” concerns a recent media arts project, the University of Local Knowledge (ULK). ULK is simultaneously a critique of established academic institutions and disciplines and a system for self-organized learning among the residents of Knowle West, an area of south Bristol (UK). Beginning in 2009, the Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) in Bristol facilitated this digital and face-to-face collaboration, aiming to uncover and celebrate local skills, talents and wisdom. While phase one of ULK focuses on making tacit knowledge explicit in videos, phase two is particularly concerned with how the content areas of the videos are organized or restructured by those who shared their experiences and ideas. This article examines ways in which ULK creates structures to invite Knowle West residents to participate in knowledge-sharing and self-organized learning.

Keywords: Knowle West, local knowledge, community knowledge, self-organized learning, video art

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Structures of Participation in the “University of Local Knowledge”

“We live there, we should know.”¹

Health Project of Hartcliffe *Report*, 1990

“Structures of Participation” is a story about an early-twenty-first-century media arts project, the University of Local Knowledge (ULK). ULK is simultaneously a critique of established academic institutions and disciplines and a system for self-organized learning among the residents of Knowle West, an area of south Bristol (UK). Beginning in 2009, the Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) in Bristol facilitated this ambitious digital and face-to-face collaboration. The organizers of ULK aim “to explore hierarchies of knowledge through uncovering and celebrating the skills, talents and wisdom that exist locally” (Hall, 2011, p. 183). Over the past four years, they have been asking: How does local knowledge connect to what happens in the rest of Bristol? Who are other brokers of knowledge and who decides what has intellectual rigor? The interaction of many of the content areas, within ULK and among other organizations, increases credibility for local knowledge. While phase one of ULK focuses on making tacit knowledge explicit in videos, phase two is particularly concerned with how content areas are organized by those who shared their skills, talents and ideas. This article examines ways in which ULK creates structures to invite Knowle West residents to participate in knowledge-sharing and self-organized learning.

Knowle West, the Media Centre, and ULK

Knowle West is a geographical area of 22,000 people within Bristol’s city limits. Predominantly consisting of social housing, this post-war estate is high in the government’s indices of deprivation. The ward of Filwood—which includes Knowle West—officially ranks among the worst wards in England for poverty, unemployment, smoking, fear of crime, mental and physical health, educational under-achievement and low levels of skills and training (Bristol City Council, 2010, ff.). As a result of these official statistics, Knowle West has been the recipient of substantial resources, but the community has not necessarily received what it wants from these interventions. It has been “done to.”

KWMC is a non-profit organization that for nearly twenty years has been located in the outskirts of Bristol, one of Britain’s key academic and cultural centers. (Figure 1) KWMC works with the residents to develop and support cultural, social and economic regeneration. Carolyn Hassan, director of KWMC, and Penny Evans, assistant director, are both artists with backgrounds in photography, filmmaking, social work, and organizing. Central to the organization’s vision is the direct engagement and empowerment of the community at every level. In practice, this means supporting people’s activism in education, employment, and local decision-making. The KWMC has a particular focus on digital media; it is committed to the exploration of excellent and innovative socially-engaged arts practice in a very local context, yet with international reach and influence. Artists, technologists, and academics work with the center to develop new ideas and ensure sustainable, locally-owned solutions, strategies, and interventions that will enable people to recognize their assets and thrive.

In conversations with the community during the winter of 2009, KWMC staff explored ways to share and give value to some of the knowledge, skills, and expertise that reside in Knowle West. While ULK emerged out of the media center's ongoing work on the estate, it represented an ambitious increase of engagement with people. ULK provided a structure to make a whole range of experiences accessible. Now ongoing, the two-part ULK is intended to have a large-scale impact in Knowle West through a breadth of engagement with the 5,500 households and a depth of relationship with individuals. ULK began by gathering community assets in the form of 1,000 videos from estate residents, but it is much more than a video art project. In addition to collection and organization of video conversations through a website (<http://ulk.org.uk/>), ULK also includes locally-based seminars, screenings, and related public events.

ULK was conceived and produced by the KWMC, residents of Knowle West, the U.S.-based artist Suzanne Lacy, and project partners, Arnolfini (a contemporary arts center and gallery), University of Bristol, Bristol City Council (through Art and the Public Realm), and the BBC. In order to create ownership of ULK by the whole community, KWMC chose not to "brand" the project as a media center initiative. Rather, the center acted as a facilitator of community involvement. Still, the trust that the KWMC had established in previous efforts and the ways in which the media center team was embedded in the community were crucial to the launch of ULK; many residents participated because KWMC was involved, whether or not they initially understood the "what" and "why" of the specific activity.

The Knowle West estate is a long, expensive bus ride from the center of Bristol; the clusters of houses are encircled by open space that provides a buffer from central Bristol below, yet also increases the distance from some urban amenities. (Figure 2) Knowle West is a resilient community, however, with very strong sense of community and close family networks. Many use the undeveloped land to graze horses, harvest produce, catch rabbits, and race pigeons. (Figure 3) Knowle West-born "trip hop" musician Tricky (born in 1968 as Adrian Nicholas Matthews Thaws) released "Knowle West Boy" in 2008; his single, "Council Estate," includes the lines, "We do the council flat and we do some jail/We don't like school, in a week we go once." Countering those lines, however, are words from "Knowledge is Power" that the rappers, Mos Deep and Lady K, wrote and performed at the ULK launch event in June 2010: "This is a Knowle West thing/Listen to what I sing/Out of our minds the knowledge spills/We got the talent, we got the skills" (Hall, 2011, p. 186).

The artist collaborating on ULK with KWMC, Suzanne Lacy, has been a leader in feminist culture and politics since the 1970s. In 2009, Lacy began a doctoral program at Gray's School of Art at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland, and continues involvement there as a visiting professor. During her initial time in Aberdeen, she met the director of the Arnolfini, Bristol's contemporary art center, Tom Trevor. When Lacy then visited Bristol, Trevor showed her around and introduced her to the KWMC. Lacy was interested in the collaborative practice of Penny Evans and Carolyn Hassan at the media center and Evans and Hassan were interested in Lacy as a feminist and artist-mentor. At this early stage, however, there was no funding for a joint project.

Lacy has used what she calls “performance structures” to provide access for various participants into her long-term, complex art works. When Lacy and the media center staff discussed ideas for a “performance structure” in Knowle West, video was a medium with which Lacy, Evans and Hassan were very familiar. The media center regularly involves its constituencies with video and audio production, large-scale projects involving multiple organizations, and digital inclusion activities that span the arts and social issues. It is not surprising, then, that these artists were drawn to each other. Other approaches for engagement with Knowle West residents included local conversations—called seminars--witnessed by interested onlookers. Lacy also suggested that some of these conversations occur among cars parked in formation, and others over group meals to amplify their impact. (Figure 4)

Evans, ULK’s creative director, is 17 years younger than Lacy. In the eighties, she was an active feminist in London protesting against Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s anti-union policies prior to and during the National Union of Mineworkers pit strike in 1984-85; visiting Greenham Common and marching with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament against the Polaris missiles being put into place in the UK; and developing political theatre at The Cockpit, a cultural hub that is part of the City of Westminster College. The “soundtrack” for Penny’s activism was ska, reggae, and punk music. Punk culture, with its strong do-it-yourself (DIY) spirit and the production of alternative spaces and platforms, also informs ULK. Hassan has an education in photography, film and media, and also in social work. She is particularly interested in a collaborative practice that demonstrates the role of the arts in grass roots activism through the sustained development of an organization that maintains close links with the surrounding community. Lacy’s experiences with long-term, large-scale projects, deep engagement with communities, and with negotiating complex partnerships, resonated with both Evans and Hassan.

While visual imagery is important to the media center and to Lacy, ULK’s aesthetics emerge out of relationships among people. As Mark Smith noted in *Local Education* (2000), “Learning [and, we would add, art] is not so much what individuals ‘do’ in their heads as what happens when people participate in certain forms of interaction” (p. 81). Rephrased in the words of Steve Belgium, the KWMC caretaker, who has lived on the estate for most of his life: “I’ve always been taught by my father that you learn a bit of everything and you get on better in life. And it’s worked. Like I say, I don’t read.... A lot of my knowledge is either through your doing stuff, or being taught by going out and doing it with other people” (S. Belgium, Irish interview, June 29, 2010).

ULK: Definitions and Purposes

The title “University of Local Knowledge” begs for some examination. Guy Berger and Pierre Duquet (1982) noted in their report for the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation: “Communities have problems, universities have departments” (p. 127). Just as knowledge loses depth or interest by dividing ideas and concepts into “departments,” so too community “problems” often remain inadequately addressed when they are categorized apart

from people interconnected in time and place. Ira Harkavy and John Puckett (1994) stress that the “unintegrated structures” of universities “work against understanding and helping to solve highly complex human and societal problems” (p. 308).

The “University” in ULK is used somewhat ironically because its framework is decidedly informal and voluntary. Barry Walsh, one of the contributors to a ULK video on community youth work, noted, “you can't spell knowledge without having ‘Knowle’ in it...” (ULK, 2011). By enabling ULK participants to share a broad range of information and skills not only through short videos, but also through public screenings of the videos, conversations, and meals, ULK activities contribute to a pool of knowledge that is animated by real people who learn in a variety of ways. This ever-shifting flow of information can be organized and re-organized to connect apparently disparate ideas, or to support an innovative combination of skills to meet a need. Knowle West resident Lesley Belgium created a drawing in 2009 showing interrelated ideas about rabbiting, connecting many disciplines in her scheme. (Figure 5)

How does the University of Local Knowledge relate to progressive education, the focus of this journal? There are some obvious connections in ULK’s emergence out of community-centered networks and generational family exchanges of knowledge, and the conversations and reciprocal relationships that characterize progressive educational approaches. Central to ULK is a vision that makes the boundaries permeable between the media center, the council estate residents and other institutions in Bristol. Similarly, progressive educators have long supported the infusion of lived experience into curricula, and curricula that engage with situated issues.

Making the expertise, wisdom and cultures of Knowle West residents visible and explicit, and linking it to other knowledge within and outside of the estate, validates previously-tacit knowledge. Connecting local knowledge to other sources of information may generate new investigations and audiences. Sandra Manson, the KWMC Youth Media Coordinator, queried in August 2012 at a workshop: “It’s not a new idea, but how often does it happen? We are not speaking for people; we are not giving them a voice. They *have* a voice. We are just providing the platform, the outlet, for that. I think ULK has provided this for so many people to speak about [what] their knowledge is, and that’s really important. It makes people feel that they have a skill, that they are valued and have something to share. It makes them feel special.”

Fraser Ford, a resident of south Bristol who has participated in a number of media center activities, commented: “ULK’s all about sharing knowledge, so if you are an artist, it goes in that direction.... It’s all things, to be honest. If people know it, then they share it, then they learn it. It expands and expands. Like a big library of things” (F. Ford, Irish interview, June 29, 2010). On another level, ULK is more than a “library of things,” more than bits of digitized knowledge from individuals. ULK is a city-wide effort to connect educational and cultural institutions in Bristol to each other as well as to social enterprises. Iris Eiting, CEO of the charity Re:Work in Knowle West (<http://www.reworkltd.org.uk>), said of the ULK

collaborations: “We are inventing ‘umbrella aims’: we can publicize the aim, that isn’t an organization,...and therefore you do not need to worry about the different missions and different agendas of the organizations. All they have to do is agree with that aim.” (I. Eiting, Irish interview, June 27, 2010). Thus, the “university” of local knowledge might also be viewed as the “umbrella” of local knowledge, with many South Bristol residents gathering to value each others’ life experiences.

According to a city report, “South Bristol is particularly affected by [Education, Skills and Training] deprivation. Four [areas, including two in Filwood] are in the most deprived 100 nationally” (Bristol City Council, 2010, p. 39). There is no high school in Knowle West, for example. Identified as educationally deprived by government agencies, then, Evans and her team ask: how might residents be convinced to share their knowledge, view their experiences as valid ways of knowing, and expand their learning networks? It is crucial that ULK be accessible and not scare away participants, as happens with the other universities in Bristol.

Bristol has two formal institutions of higher education, the University of Bristol (UoB) and the University of the West of England (UWE). In the last decade, access to public institutions of higher education in the U.K. has shifted as admission of students from private schools has risen along with the cost of fees. Tuition fees were first introduced in the UK in 1998; now for new full-time students they cost up to £9,000 (“Education and Learning,” 2012; Mulholland, 2010). While fee waivers are available for low-income students, they are not offered to those attending part-time. In short, the local universities in Bristol are culturally and financially at a great distance from south Bristol residents like those in Knowle West and quite a contrast to the “University” of Local Knowledge. Even if the universities were free, however, residents of Knowle West view the university as a very intimidating place; they don’t feel clever enough to apply there. Further, the universities and private schools are sited in north Bristol, so they also are geographically far from the estate in the south.

Methods of Inquiry: Gathering the Videos

Evans observed in Knowle West that really valuable knowledge and expertise often was not acknowledged or valued if it came from life and circumstance, and was stored in the body and not in textbooks. Rather than lose that knowledge and dismiss people’s life experiences, Evans and her colleagues—based on long acquaintance with the community—initiated ULK. Filming sessions set up as conversations elicited participants’ knowledge. (If residents had been given flip cameras, for example, or approached the filming as interviews, Evans believes that many of the residents would not have shared, recognized, or identified their knowledge.) Given Evans’s familiarity with Knowle West, she and the ULK team identified people who could “perform” these conversations in the context of a video “platform.” These “performers” have been an integral part of the process.

As creative director, Evans has been intimately involved in ULK from its inception, collaborating since 2009 with Knowle West community members, media center staff,

institutions in Bristol, international artists, and government entities. She was involved in every aspect of the conception, administration, implementation and production of ULK from the start, but she particularly directed and edited video, shot and edited photographs, and raised funds tirelessly.²

The KWMC adopted various strategies to create the ambitious collection of ULK videos; the center organized discussions around themes, for example. Initiating new relationships, talking about the concepts of ULK, and inviting people to discuss what they might like to share with the rest of their community created momentum and a sense of ownership around the project. The subsequent video conversations were filmed in local venues--private homes, garages, dance halls, football pitches, and gardens--as well as specific filming days at the KWMC.

To expand the visibility of ULK, bring in more participants, and gain feedback from contributors, the center distributed specially-designed postcards to write down knowledge and then deposit in ULK "mail" boxes; flyers, newsletters and social media reinforced word-of-mouth, which is the most common way of sharing information in Knowle West. A communal "Lunch on the Green" in front of the community center helped launch ULK by announcing the project to the estate residents and providing a locally-sourced sit-down meal for about 250 people in attendance, along with entertainment and opportunities to create and view videos. (Figure 6) During the "Lunch on the Green," three video crews were on hand to record the local knowledge of the attendees. Six public screenings of the videos then occurred in different parts of the estate.

Four "seminars" were held in Knowle West, facilitated by KWMC and the University of Bristol. The seminars entailed discussion-based conversations among estate residents and those from elsewhere in Bristol who shared similar interests, on subjects ranging from equine welfare to education and exclusion (or school suspension, as it is called in some countries). Individual experts in Knowle West who were willing to share their knowledge and/or interpretation of a subject in a public exchange were paired with academics who had an interest in discussing the same subjects. The seminars aimed to integrate different communities on equal footing around topics of common interest. All of these approaches--communal meals, seminars, video screenings, postcards--are structures of participation intended to expand the network of people involved in ULK and, by extension, the knowledge gathered and generated.

Working with Evans's comprehensive knowledge of the videos created to date, we identified vignettes that illuminated the community's ideas about education and its attendant conditions. Further, audio interviews conducted by Irish supplemented the videos. For example, Irish spoke with Davina Froom, a former youth worker with the Knowle West Media Centre. When asked how she explained ULK to people, she said:

It's really hard [to explain]. ULK is about getting knowledge from everybody else about something that they know that other people wouldn't know.... I try and break it

down into simpler terms, especially when I am working with young people because they find it really hard to understand big words, just like I did when I was younger. You don't talk to them with huge words, like "university" because they find that scary anyway, it's like growing up (D. Froom, Irish interview, June 29, 2010).

Fraser Ford, who managed the "cinema" where some videos were screened during the June 2010 launch of ULK, remarked: "University means a big building with a bunch of suit people standing around telling you what to do and you just nod and you go 'yeah'..." (F. Ford, Irish interview, June 29, 2010). Both Ford and Froom are in their early twenties. Clearly "university" to them and/or those with whom they work has off-putting connotations, including of presumptuous people (suit people) giving unwelcome instructions.

Irish visited Bristol when Lacy and the media center were preparing to launch ULK. As of this writing, Irish has interviewed about twenty people (some more than once) during two visits to Bristol, in June 2010 and June 2011, and participated in the ULK inaugural event, Lunch on the Green, in 2010. She also witnessed three of the four seminars in 2011.³ Irish also used the Local Studies Collection of the Bristol Central Library.

Local Knowledge in Knowle West

Few people on the estate aspire to obtaining a university degree in part because there are few role models, and because there are no high schools on the estate. A long-time resident of the estate, Denise Britt, noted:

It's just one primary school now, that's all that's there.... We haven't got secondary school in Knowle West at all. And our children now got to go to about half a dozen, probably it could be more, secondary schools, across the estate. And out of those they can only get a bus, a direct bus, to two. Secondary schools amalgamated.... The educational side of it sort of said, they didn't want the schools and they started to run them down gradually over a period of time....

When our children started going to different schools, there was lots of trouble ... because [of the attitude toward] children from Knowle West: "I don't want my kids mixing with them." It went not only from the parents and the teachers, it went down to the kids; there was lots of bullying. It also has a knock-on for the after-school clubs because the schools are so far away. They all got to travel across major roads to be able to get to those schools, there's lots of traffic. Children can't stay behind and do the after-school clubs because of transport, and buses.... So our kids were hanging about on the streets with nothing to do. It's not fair. It's our kids that suffer in the long run (ULK, 2011).

The "knock-on" effects, or consequences, of what Britt described—the bullying, the social isolation, and the limits to participating in after-school activities—include a compounding and pervasive lack of confidence in themselves on the part of Knowle West residents. Resident and university graduate Emily Smith noted in a ULK video:

I went to University with people who actually weren't that clever, to be honest...but they absolutely brimmed with confidence.... In Filwood [Knowle West] and in a lot of the places in south Bristol that we are talking about, people's role models are maybe cleaners. Their parents or their grandparents cleaning, or manual labor. They don't aspire to anything higher. I also know how that feels because when I got my degree (I got a very reasonable degree), I remember leaving and was looking in the *Evening Post* for a job and I was looking in the cleaning section. Seriously! ...You don't feel that you should succeed at anything other than something quite low. I think the most important thing that our schools can instill in our children in Knowle West—I have children now--is the confidence in their own abilities and that actually they can achieve anything they want if they set their minds to it. For so long we have been put down.... (ULK, 2011)

“Local is a relational category: for something to be local, something else has to be distant,” according to author Mark Smith (2000, p. 9.) Clearly a university education is distant for most south Bristol residents, financially out of reach and, for some, perceived as “scary.” What else defines “local” in the context of ULK? We’ve noted how two “local” universities—the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England—likely seem far removed from most young people in south Bristol. Smith further examined how “local” knowledge is *situated* knowledge. He asked: “[T]o what extent is all knowledge ‘local’? Ideas and images are not things that we simply retrieve from our memories, but have to be created at the time of use” (Smith, 2000, p. 17). Gail Bevan from Knowle West stressed the importance of knowledge and place at a 2012 workshop, *Exploring Change and the Future of Bristol: New Ideals, Visions and Concepts*: “ULK gives people confidence. It’s been done where the person feels confident and nobody’s had to go out of their way. It’s all been done around them; that makes them feel more comfortable as well.”

Knowledge is literally located in place, time, and relationships. It emerges or is validated when the sharer hears him/herself telling a camera or another person something that they know from experience or observation. When knowledge is exchanged between generations, time becomes a factor as well. Because context is so critical for meaning, ULK provides a variety of structures for participants to join, assemble, organize, and adapt knowledge in “their” university. A grandparent caring for her grandchild she officially adopted, for example, reflects on her experiences in a video interview. Watching the video of herself reflecting, she has the opportunity to hear herself, at a slight remove, via the digital account. This act of self-revelation is a means of knowledge creation through media. In a “seminar” setting, when the grandmother joins others in a discussion about larger issues related to carers, she not only listens to herself, but others witness her stories, and she witnesses theirs. The experiences connect across individual lives and expand people’s knowledge networks, in addition to affirming people’s experiential knowledge.

The expertise of KWMC staffer Steve Belgium demonstrates how knowledge is based in relationships—often across generations--and in place. By preference, habit and

necessity, his Romany family has been foraging, raising, and hunting food for several generations. (Figure 7) While plucking a pheasant in front of the video camera he said:

Dad always hunted. [Pheasant hunting's] not always legal to be honest, but that's the way it was around here.... My oldest daughter plucked her first pheasant when she was eight. So did my middle daughter. And my son done it same age. They ain't got no fear now.... They're used to it basically.... These big, big shoots, what shoot over 1500 birds, they don't take nearly half the birds back, which I find a waste of money, waste of time. What's the point of going to shoot just for sport? I've always done it for food.... If you eat any animal, you should be prepared to kill it, in my book (ULK, 2011).

Belgium passed on his father's and his own knowledge about hunting to his children, all of whom have lived in and around south Bristol. Belgium's knowledge is local and shared inter-generationally. In *Local Education*, Smith (2000) noted that learning lies "not so much in the individual mind as in interactions between people in communities" (p. 38).

ULK allows participants to link oppressive and embodied challenges such as school exclusions (called suspensions in the US) and unemployment, for example, to generative performances such as composing poetry and raising rabbits for food, among hundreds of other topics showcased in the videos. Because there are multiple "structures of participation" in the social and artistic framework of ULK--multiple ways of making tacit knowledge explicit--various people can connect ideas at their own pace, in their particular situation. As Raphael Samuel (1994) noted, "[H]istory is not the prerogative of the historian.... It is, rather, a social form of knowledge; the work of a thousand different hands" (p. 8).

Part Two of ULK: The Website and Beyond

Emily Smith, who went to the University of Bristol in the 1990s, recounted her post-graduation experience. "The prejudice around people from, say, Knowle West or Filwood going to university is [big].... [T]hat prejudice is still there. It is really strong when you get outside of the estate" (ULK, 2011). Another estate resident, Sandra Manson, the KWMC Youth Media Coordinator, who grew up in Knowle West and continues to live and work there, described what is called "post code discrimination." In June 2010, Manson observed: "People assume that if you're from this area, you're rough, you're unemployed, you're claiming benefits, you're not a nice person, you don't know how to hold a conversation, you're uneducated, the list goes on and on." (S. Manson, Irish interview, June 29, 2010)

ULK's video archive resists the stereotypes of Knowle West residents as uneducated, or rough. While that is all well and good, the positive aims of ULK now are to include more estate residents in this "university" and validate their knowledge. Further, by using a web-based interface, the ULK project can extend beyond south Bristol and contribute to knowledge in locales outside the estate. The ULK website is crucially more than a digital representation of discrete individuals; it is a site of knowledge exchange and restructuring of

that knowledge through juxtaposition and creation. ULK is shifting even as it is being created and expanded. Evaluator Roz Hall (2011) noted: “The success of the project is about reaching beyond gatekeepers and people who regularly engage in such opportunities, to work with people who are not usually involved. This involves expanding networks beyond those that already exist and finding ways of reaching people who aren’t part of existing networks but who might be interested in contributing” (p. 185). Paul Coyne, the Community Spaces Coordinator in Knowle West, described one group of people whom ULK especially wants to reach: “There are some people around here who don’t give themselves enough credit to actually have a voice” (P. Coyne, Irish interview, June 29, 2010).

The second phase of ULK, now underway, combines embodied and digital experiences. For example, the “seminar” on grandparent carers has met again to draft a research agenda using case studies. The “seminar” on equine welfare met at the University of Bristol’s School of Veterinary Practices to continue their collaboration. A “freshers’ fayre,” mirroring an undergraduate orientation, was held in Knowle West to showcase and launch the website and publicize local groups and businesses, such as clubs and exercise programs. (Figure 8) The website is being piloted throughout this “academic year” by providing ULK “pop-ups” for the residents to explore the site and organize their own “playlists” of videos, building their own structures for learning and sharing. (Figure 9) Members of the “student body” are working with fellows (members of the ULK steering group) to restructure and upload new knowledge. There have been over eighteen thousand views of the videos! Those who participate in making and sharing their playlists are ULK lecturers; when new material can be uploaded, those doing so may join a faculty. There will be further recognition via graduation ceremonies. In contrast to the costly institutions of higher education in Bristol, ULK is an accessible university, with distributed knowledge-sharing and no fees.

As community audiences increasingly become content providers as well content users (prosumers), the lines blur between doing and viewing, teaching and learning. The video archive of ULK will be publicly accessible and, to an extent still being determined, editable. The video screening events held to date allowed contributors to “view their own films and see how they had initially been categorized within the University of Local Knowledge...” (Hall, 2011, p. 187). Sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) noted that “many personal problems cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues—and in terms of the problems of history making” (p. 226). Thus the archive becomes a means to validate people’s collective experiences.

Living as Form was a 2011 exhibition (and now book) organized by Nato Thompson, chief curator of Creative Time. Thompson (2012) claims that the projects he selected “indicate a new social order—ways of life that emphasize participation, challenge power, and span disciplines ranging from urban planning and community work to theater and the visual arts” (p. 19). Thompson included artist Lacy’s earlier work in the exhibit, and his words provide a usefully broad context for ULK:

In a world of vast cultural production, the arts have become an instructive space to

gain valuable skill sets in the techniques of performativity, representation, aesthetics, and the creation of affect.... If politics have become performative, so too, has knowledge—in other words, you have to share what you know. Researchers and scientists [and educators] who feel a sense of political urgency to disseminate their findings might use the skill sets of symbolic manipulation and performativity in order to get their message out (pp. 22, 24).

ULK has introduced structures for Knowle West residents to perform and share their knowledge in videos, represent their experiences and feelings within an arts framework, and connect what they know to larger issues in their own locale as well as Bristol as a whole. As the website link is disseminated in the next year, the online organization, expansion, and restructuring of community knowledge will instantiate the shifting networks of learning that provide lifelong challenges and upliftment.

Endnotes:

¹ Quoted by A. Ravetz, 2001, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment*, p. 226.

The authors would like to thank Jon Gant at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Mike Fraser, Susanna Martin, and Wan Yee at the University of Bristol, and Caitlin Kennedy and Nicky Williams, as well as the anonymous readers of this article.

² Additional funders included Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)/Digital Economy “Research in the Wild” via the University of Bristol; University of the West of England; PLaCE: Place Location Context and Environment; the Arts Council England; National Coordinating Centre; and Quartet. The total production budget is approximately £93,000, although further funding needs to be raised.

³ Evans has signed release forms for all the video participants. Irish received Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign to conduct interviews with ULK participants over a three-year period. (IRB #10738) Irish conducted interviews in Bristol with Michelle Baughan, Steve Belgium, Jane Bradley, *Karron* Chaplin, Rachel Clarke, Paul Coyne, Martha Crean, Iris Eiting, Penny Evans, Fraser Ford, Davina Froom, Roz Hall, Carolyn Hassan, Ken Jones, Suzanne Lacy, Sandra Manson, Tom Trevor, and Misty Tunks. (No one requested anonymity; oral consent was obtained.)

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Appendix



Figure 1. Knowle West Media Centre, Bristol, UK. The straw bale building has a computer lab, auditorium/gallery, sound studio, and office space for rent, among other amenities. Photo courtesy of Knowle West Media Centre.



Figure 2. Aerial view of Knowle West showing the triangular open space in front of the community center, where the ULK Lunch on Green was launched in June 2010. Shops and flats face the green on the other sides. Photo courtesy of Knowle West Media Centre.



Figure 3. Knowle West, Bristol, viewed from the surrounding green space. Photo courtesy of Knowle West Media Centre.



Figure 4. Knowle West resident Ted Cockerall sharing his knowledge about classic cars with Penny Evans. Louie Blystad Collins is on the camera. Photo courtesy of Knowle West Media Centre.

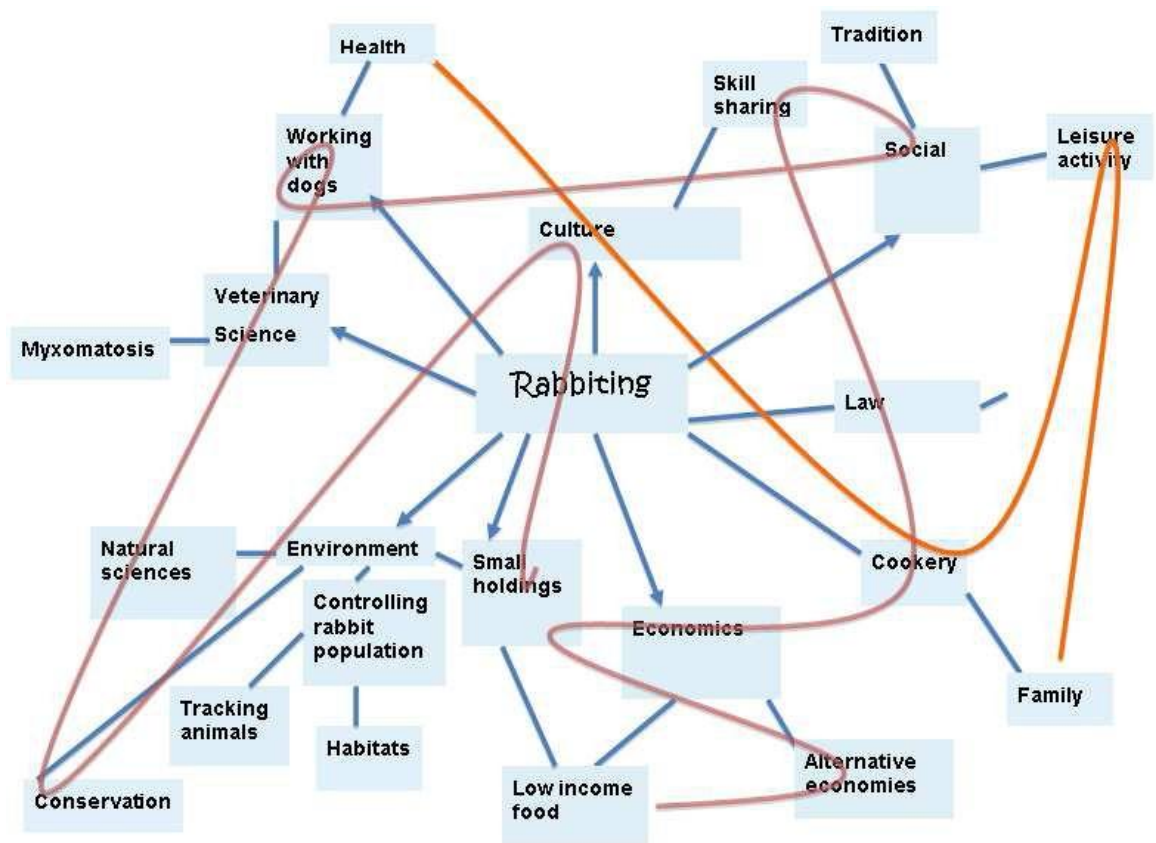


Figure 5. Diagram of Rabbiting Knowledge, based on a 2009 drawing by Lesley Belgium. Courtesy of University of Bristol.



Figure 6. ULK's Lunch on the Green at Filwood in Knowle West, Bristol, on June 26, 2010. Michelle Baughan, videographer from San Francisco, helps record local knowledge. Another video crew works behind her. A sit-down meal was just one of the activities of the afternoon, which also included live entertainment, children's events, and screening and creating of video vignettes. Photo courtesy Knowle West Media Centre.



Figure 7. Steve Belgium plucking a pheasant. Photo courtesy of Knowle West Media Centre.



Figure 8. Freshers Fayre, showing balloon artist and literature table at the Knowle West Media Centre. Photo courtesy of Knowle West Media Centre.

THATS NOT BAD
IS IT?
GOOD FOR HER AGE...



YVONNE WATCHES THE FILM ON BELLY DANCING



Figure 9. Sketch of a “pop-up,” when residents gather around a computer to watch the ULK videos, 2013, Joff Winterhart, artist. Courtesy of Knowle West Media Centre.