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GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL INTERACTION PLATFORM:
PHASE 2 SUMMARY REPORT

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY FOR SUSTAINABILITY (GAPS)

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INTRODUCTION

What urban capacities exist to develop sustainable urban futures, formally and informally? What do different policies for sustainable urban development look like in different countries? How do different stakeholders and communities influence policy formulation? What can we learn from sharing experiences between cities in different parts of the globe?

These are the central questions addressed by a comparative project within the Mistra Urban Futures Centre, with partners in Gothenburg, Cape Town and Greater Manchester. The aim of the project, entitled 'Governance And Policy for Sustainability' is to produce a framework for understanding how the challenges of sustainable urban development are shaped in different contexts and what steps cities can take to enhance the effectiveness of policy-making and implementation.

This report provides a summary of the work carried out in 2013 and 2014 by the Greater Manchester partners. Through the Greater Manchester Local Interaction Platform, the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (SURF) at the University of Salford Manchester, the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities' (AGMA) Low Carbon Hub and the Social Action Research Foundation have co-produced a range of activities to examine the challenges faced and the factors which shape the capacity and capability for concerted, integrated and trans-disciplinary responses within the different urban contexts.

Aims and Objectives

The core focus of the project is on how sustainable urban development has been conceptualized and understood in different contexts in relation to the pressures of globalization, inequalities, resource constraints and climate change ('what') and on the role of alternative knowledges, skills and capacities to shape and enhance different responses to the challenges of sustainable urban development ('how'). Specifically, the project has been developed to:

- identify present challenges and the extent to which these are reflected in policy formulation, delivery and practice;
- consider the conditions in which responses to urban sustainability can be developed;
- examine the way in which different knowledges and skills are used to inform urban sustainability;
- identify different possible trajectories and transition pathways;
- develop a comparative framework for understanding how different cities and city-regions can address the challenges of urban sustainability.

The project is composed of four key elements which shape the content of the work: a) governance and policy b) knowledge and skills c) challenges and transition pathways and d) comparative analysis. These are summarised in Table 1.

<i>Governance and Policy</i>	To provide background understanding of the governance of and policies for urban sustainability in each of the LIP contexts
<i>Knowledge and Skills</i>	To understand how the knowledge and skills of different individuals, groups, communities and organisations are integrated within urban sustainability policies in each context and the implications for practice
<i>Challenges and Transition Pathways</i>	To understand the different challenges facing each of the LIPs and possible transition pathways
<i>Comparative Analysis</i>	To produce a framework for understanding how the challenges of urban sustainability are shaped in different contexts, the factors that determine city-regional responses and the knowledge, skills and expertise that cities need to make informed decisions about their present interventions and future trajectories

Importantly, the project is framed through a comparative but context-sensitive framework which allows divergence of methodological approach in different cities in order to best work with a variety of stakeholders.

Structure and Methods

Phase 1 of the project (2012) was built on collaboration between the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities' (AGMA) Low Carbon Hub, the SURF Centre at the University of Salford Manchester and a range of other 'official' GM interests through documentary analysis, workshop dialogue and an interview programme. This produced a Baseline Assessment and a set of 5 exemplars of sustainable urban development in Greater Manchester. The baseline assessment mapped:

1. The specific challenges of urban sustainability in Greater Manchester;
2. The content of formal policies designed to address urban sustainability;
3. The roles of different organisations, groups and communities in formulating policies;
4. The forums and mechanisms for consultation and participation in formal policy making-processes;
5. The mechanisms for and barriers to ensuring that policies are implemented and assessing their effectiveness;
6. The evidence base for urban sustainability policy; and

7. Relevant activities and groups that remain *outside* the formal policy process.

The baseline assessment was carried out using two parallel approaches. An action research approach by Mark Atherton, Director of Environment, supported by AGMA's Environment Team embedded within current governance structures, was used in an attempt to both capture an accurate baseline within a city region undergoing rapid change, whilst simultaneously supporting the Team to identify solutions to practical problems being experienced in the governance, policy and knowledge for sustainability arena in GM. A literature review and a small number of individual inquiries were combined with a stakeholder workshop in October 2012 and formal interviews to gather the baseline and test the accuracy of its assumptions and the conclusions drawn. In parallel, SURF carried out an interview programme, external review and mapping of different examples cited as 'good practice' of sustainable urban development initiatives across the range of pilot work. (For a more in-depth review of the methodological approach, please see Baseline Assessment report, 2012). The materials from the Phase 1 Baseline Assessment are included in the section on 'Challenges' below.

Phase 2 of the project (2013) has aimed to explore how different individuals, organisations and communities view the challenges of urban sustainability, responses advanced and potential pathways to address those challenges. We have encapsulated this phase through the simplified idea of 'Options'. A number of methods were used.

1) A View From Within: The Practitioner-Researcher Approach

The approach developed in Phase 1 was continued, with Mark Atherton and the Low Carbon Hub team working collaboratively with the academic partners to consider 'Options' from within the AGMA family for responding to the challenges of governance, knowledge and policy for sustainable urban development which were highlighted in the baseline assessment. This involved identifying the positive and negative impacts of existing initiatives to assess how well they addressed the challenges identified and what mitigation measures might be needed to address any negative impacts and unintended consequences. Through a table, other desirable/feasible options were identified and, where necessary the perceived barriers to their implementation. Other methods included designing and carrying out a bespoke questionnaire to AGMA policy leads; engaging the 10 district climate change lead officers; holding meetings with representatives of third sector groups; organising workshops with the regions' Universities and bringing forward initiatives for consideration by the broader AGMA family to support Platform as a tool for communication. The approach was characterised by both reflection and action in response to the identified challenges.

2) A View From the Districts: Engaging the District Climate Change Leads

Interviews were carried out with nominated representatives of the districts for climate change/sustainability to understand existing and potential ways of bridging the gap between citizens and Greater Manchester and developing more joined up policy frameworks between local authorities and GM. 8 of the 10 local authorities were able to participate in the study, with one representative holding responsibility for two districts.

This resulted in 7 interviews around a number of themes. The interviews sought to understand the differences between district approaches and the extent to which districts were subject to pressures from 'above' from the national level; how they worked with each other; their relationships and experiences of working with AGMA and the Low Carbon Hub and how they engaged with community groups in their role. Perspectives were also gained on what 'sustainability' means and how the definition and remit of their positions was changing in light of contemporary issues.

3) A View from the Ground: Perspectives from Community Groups

In Phase 2 the project team was expanded to include Dan Silver and Amina Lone from the Social Action Research Foundation (SARF). The aim of their strand of work was to establish forums with local and non-state actors to consider the challenges and explore what options might be preferred from a community perspective. This involved workshops for organisations operating in Manchester and Salford, and also one covering organisations operating across Greater Manchester. A total of eighteen organisations participated in discussions, coming from a range of different specialities including food producers and retailers, businesses, the advice sector, refugee community organisations, community centres, business, anti-poverty campaigners, environmentalists and local tenants and residents' groups. At these focus groups we discussed issues around community involvement, AGMA structures and the idea of sustainable urban development.

4) Synthesizing Perspectives

In November 2013, a workshop was collaboratively organized and run by the members of the project team. This involved co-defining the agenda, approach and invitation list. Representatives from AGMA, local authorities and community groups attended the meeting, held at the Biospheric Foundation in East Salford. The workshop was organized around the main themes of the project; Governance, Policy and Knowledge. A joint presentation was used to structure the feedback gleaned from each of the above mechanisms to the group. Participants then broke into working groups to explore what options they felt could be developed and how.

THE CHALLENGES

The starting point for Phase 2 of the work was the table of challenges produced through the Baseline Assessment. These included:

- Governance: A fluid and rapidly changing two-tier governance system requiring greater articulation and engagement with local groups
- Policy: A need for greater joined-up thinking between and across policy areas for sustainable urban development, particularly around social inclusion, diversity and equality
- Knowledge: A fragmented and incomplete knowledge base for sustainability with little evidence of learning from grassroots initiatives influencing policy and limited connections into research being done within universities

A full summary of the Phase 1 work can be read at <http://ontheplatform.org.uk/article/governing-sustainability-greater-manchester>

The challenges, summarised in Table 2 below, can be understood in terms of three sets of relational issues:

1. *Upwards* – commissions, agencies, forums and partnerships of Greater Manchester are often culturally disposed to look ‘upwards’ to UK national government and aligning with and even anticipating national government priorities including the ways in which Greater Manchester can be a site of experimentation for national priorities.
2. *Horizontally* – a central challenge is to constitute strategic metropolitan level capacity. The complexity of sustainable urban development is reflected in Greater Manchester in the challenges of generating strategic development/thinking between agencies, the prevalence of a culture of immediacy, given political and electoral cycles and the challenges in trying to coordinate differences in approach between the 10 local authorities constitutive of Greater Manchester. This is exacerbated through a fragmented knowledge and intelligence base on sustainability across Greater Manchester.
3. *Downwards* – a significant issue is that relationships between the strategic metropolitan level and sub-metropolitan non-governmental agencies, organisations, individuals and neighbourhoods are less well developed. Formal and informal participation is said to be promoted through representation on internal and external commissions and agency sub-groups. However, even on this basis, it may be that local voluntary sector groups, BME groups, representatives of community groups and small businesses are underrepresented in city-regional strategy and policy processes. Some partners have highlighted that engagement, where it happens, tends to be on a fairly informal and not well structured basis.

One highly significant consequence of this is that the formal metropolitan tier is perceived not to connect effectively with many citizens and stakeholders.

TABLE 2: The Challenges of urban sustainability in GM
GOVERNANCE & POLICY
Localism: Local Authorities retain responsibilities for sustainable urban development yet sustainable urban development requires a City region scale approach. Differences in local approach. 'Localist' focus.
The GM Policy Framework does not reflect the full inclusion of SUD policy topics. Prioritisation of SUD's policy framework.
Prevailing economic conditions
No single GM governance body for SUD.
Wider socio economic issues, notably health and equality and diversity, social inclusion, environmental quality and cultural/behaviour change appear to be given less consideration.
Changes to political landscape. Lack of systematic thinking (SUD)
Complexity of SUD topic and silo approach to thinking. Lack of focus/priority. Pursuit of economic growth (rather than development).
GOVERNANCE & ENGAGEMENT
GM does not connect with many citizens and stakeholders.
The GM Policy Framework does not reflect the full inclusion of SUD stakeholders. Under-represented groups:- Local Voluntary sector groups BME Groups Representatives of community groups (although there is local political representation) Some public sector partners SME's (although the Chamber of Commerce is represented)
Local level of stakeholder groups. Need to engage with communities at local scale. How can AGMA better utilise the relationship management mechanisms of the districts to better engage with local groups?
GOVERNANCE & KNOWLEDGE
Headline indicators are largely economic.
No single evidence base. Need to re-build evidence base.
No-one repository for research Gaps in Local Authority data or sharing?
No formal audit (Sustainability Assessments).
GOVERNANCE & RESOURCE
Lack of time and resources to engage.
Lack of research (budget).
Imbalance of resources between strategy and delivery.
Lack of formal management system
Staff resource constraints/organisational change

The emphasis in Phase 2 was on Options for addressing these challenges from three viewpoints: that of AGMA's Low Carbon Hub; a viewpoint from the districts and from community groups. Finally, the project brought these perspectives together via the workshop.

THE VIEW FROM THE LOW CARBON HUB

Governance and Policy: many of the challenges outlined relate to the AGMA family as a whole and not only to the Low Carbon Hub. The report highlighted the difficulty in working across the AGMA family on a broader range of sustainability issues that are outside the remit of the Low Carbon Hub. A major barrier here was seen to be political will to make difficult decisions regarding, for instance, the relationship between climate change and social justice. The primary option developed was to see the Low Carbon Hub as a vehicle for best practice, raising issues that have implications for the broader AGMA family.

Our intention was/is to influence AGMA internally on a wider SUD agenda - though, with current resources, the process for this has to be organic, using existing communication channels and meetings and demonstrating best practice and leadership through the Low Carbon Hub.

The emphasis was more on tactics for bringing about structural or agenda change (via persuasion, leading by example, building coalitions for change), than on implementing a particular option. The process of thinking through Options had highlighted the need to reconsider relationships between local and city-regional tiers of governance, but had not yet led to clarity on specific roles and responsibilities.

I don't think a traditional approach will be effective – you will attract the usual suspects who will promote their specific cause and unless they are directly referenced in policy will conclude that the powers that be wouldn't listen, let alone relinquish their policy to

Governance and Engagement: the Options paper highlighted a number of measures that were being or had been taken to improve engagement with different groups. Unlike issues associated with structural or policy change, barriers to improving the engagement of the Low Carbon Hub were seen as relating to capacity and resource rather than will. Furthermore, it was felt by third and voluntary sector organisations engaged by the hub that a 'new approach' was needed.

Whilst placing engagement with third and voluntary sectors organisations on the agenda of the Low Carbon Hub, the work highlighted the difficulties in identifying and contacting third sector groups with relevance to the policy agenda of the Hub and specifying what the 'engagement' is for. Equally, there are clear differences in the aims of the Low Carbon Hub (sustainable economic development) and those of some community groups (one planet/steady state). The report notes that divergent emphases on climate justice and climate information may require differences in approach.

A distinction can be seen between those activities aimed at *communication* and those at *engagement*. The options outlined related more to the former than the latter. Two central issues arising were:

- Whether the Low Carbon Hub, as part of a broader city-regional body, should develop a role in engaging with the 2.6m residents directly and
- How to promote the broader sustainability messages when the AGMA communications role remains out of scope of Low Carbon Hub influence.

Governance and Knowledge: three issues were covered in the report – (a) how to manage a fragmented knowledge base and the desirability / feasibility of a knowledge repository; (b) relationships with universities and access to the university knowledge base and (c) how to review and appraise existing policies and measure progress with appropriate indicators. Notably, the options analysis does not consider the need to expand definitions of what can be considered as evidence nor admit that there may be relevant knowledge outside of formal institutions (see Views from the Ground, below). It would appear that there is greatest consensus to address relationships with universities, though issues of resources and capacity remain.

Governance and Resource: the report noted that the situation regarding a lack of resource and capacity to address the challenges had not changed. A central question emerging is whether or not this issue could provide the impetus to address other more structural or agenda-based issues.

The Low Carbon Hub reported that they found the undertaking of an options analysis to be useful in identifying alternative approaches to resolving the issues in Phase 1 and clarifying the barriers. A key question provoked for the Low Carbon Hub was “why does the Low Carbon Hub want to engage better?” Through a workshop with representatives of the voluntary and third sector, a discussion took place about the possibility of expanding the model for Manchester A Certain Future to the Greater Manchester scale.

The work of the Low Carbon Hub both reported on and sought to address these challenges. To this extent, it was found to be difficult to separate the actions undertaken by the Low Carbon Hub independently from those undertaken as part of the Mistra Urban Futures programmes. The Greater Manchester Local Interaction Platform was conceived as a key mechanism to catalyse addressing the identified challenges. Examples include the development of Platform as an online space, engaging with the voluntary sector and shaping more strategic relationships with universities.

THE VIEW FROM THE DISTRICTS

Over 150 pages of interview transcripts were produced to support this work, covering a wide variety of themes. Here, salient points are highlighted around the themes of governance, policy and knowledge.

Governance: organizational structures for addressing multiple sustainability issues at district level vary greatly, with climate change leads occupying different posts and having variable reporting lines. In all cases, capacity (staff and finances) had reduced during recent years, with some districts retaining a single or shared officer post, whilst others retained significant teams. A common issue related to the tactics used to bring about wider cultural change within local authority organizations, the ‘persuasion’ role that officers occupied and the importance of senior support and ‘ambassadors’ who would support the agenda. Positive informal relationships between districts were noted to work well for information exchange and collaboration, with less clarity about the benefits of the more recently constituted district Climate Change Leads grouping.

There was a consensus that the relationship between the districts and the Low Carbon Hub could be improved in order to ensure that a ‘lowest common denominator’ approach isn’t adopted. Some felt that they participated in Greater Manchester activity only because they ‘had been told to’ rather than because the benefits of collaboration were readily apparent.

Some criticism of the Low Carbon Hub, mirrored in wider concerns about the operation of the GMCA, was that it tended to adopt a top-down and controlling approach, in which agendas are received for implementation, rather than co-constructed. Warm words concerning local authority engagement were not always felt to be supported by adequate time to produce input to policy processes.

What used to be a case of the districts sharing best practice is becoming increasingly just what we are told to do from AGMA. It is becoming much more a top down approach... I'm slightly concerned that is going to be one size fits nobody in the end kind of thing you know

It has always been an in-joke that there is no AGMA project, there's only what the districts do; it's the good officers working in the districts that actually make stuff happen, all these strategies and plans at AGMA level don't actually do anything. That's actually changed in the past 12 months, possibly 2 years, and there are actually now AGMA level initiatives that are delivering stuff

A number of options were advanced. There was a clear preference for a more enabling and coordinating role of the Low Carbon Hub to support work in the districts. This was underpinned by a desire for the Hub to be sufficiently supported by AGMA so that it is best able to deliver and implement its objectives in collaboration with the districts, rather than focusing on income generation or its institutional position.

The emphasis should be to support activity in the districts and encourage (rather than enforce) collaboration where that is necessary. There was less agreement on the governance structures of the city-region as a whole, with some advocating a directly-

elected mayor and strengthening of democratic mandate and powers for the GMCA; whilst others felt AGMA should be abolished.

Policy: the district interviews were organized at a time of immense change. The majority of interviewees agreed that the agenda on 'sustainability' tended to be interpreted through the lenses of 'climate change' and 'green growth', with other policy issues given less consideration. There were differences in how interviewees felt able to negotiate the space of their positions and, in the words of one interviewee, to 'sneak other agendas in the back door'.

Whilst there was a widespread feeling that economic growth was too dominant a priority, and in some cases needed to be challenged outright, this was felt to be the main driver behind the city-regional project and the area where the greatest collective gains might be won. Within such discussions, there appeared to be a mismatch between the values expressed by officials in these positions and the priorities of the city-region and the Low Carbon Hub as a whole, with some Districts struggling to cope with existing workloads, given the constraints of funding and resources.

The sustainability enthusiasts at higher levels realised that if any of the agenda was going to survive at all, then it had to seize on those elements that would justify it in the eyes of the powers that be. It's the whole green growth thing, key documents: the Stern Review, the mini Stern for Manchester – these are absolutely key documents to justify action on climate change in Manchester... we are only able to get senior decision makers on board by framing it in an economic way, that's the sad reality.

There's a very comprehensive work program driven through the Low Carbon Hub, and essentially we are, that's incredibly useful, and we are now under pressure or expected to be able to explain to people how we are doing the things that AGMA is asking us to. I mean an example would be District Heating Networks.

Certain agendas, such as district heat networks and fuel poverty, were easier to implement than others, with a particular gap around cultural change/low carbon culture and issues of social inclusion. Some districts had developed key areas of expertise and experience linked to the specificities of their areas: for instance, flood resilience in Salford, heat networks and community engagement in Manchester, hydro in Stockport and wind in Rochdale.

An interesting difference emerged in how local authorities approached strategy-making and formation. Manchester has a reputation for developing strategies and visions and making clear and audible expressions of its policy ambitions and plans. In other cases, such as Salford, locally-differentiated strategies were not seen to be necessary in light of the revised Greater Manchester Climate Change strategy. Instead the emphasis was on developing action plans. In contrast, in Rochdale a project-based approach appeared to

be preferred over a formalized strategy. To note, outside Manchester, where written strategies have not been produced, widespread consultation appears to be weaker and community engagement less structured, institutionalized and systemic.

Knowledge: linked to this latter point are strong differences in how knowledge and evidence is conceptualized in the different districts. Manchester: A Certain Future was produced in a novel way for the city and is emblematic of a different approach to stakeholder engagement which offers ownership of the climate change plans. The strategy was explicitly 'narrative-led' and draws on a range of non-formal and professionalized forms of knowledge.

There's an increasing realisation that that's how we bring things together – at the end of the day if we begin to crack the communication thing between the relevant offices and officers themselves back at their own ranch are able to crack the communication thing, then AGMA will work, the low carbon hub will work a lot, lot better

I would much rather be engaged with the public every day because ultimately they are the people who will make it happen; sustainability cannot be done to them, it must be done with them. Things holding that back, time, resources, politics, priorities, all kinds of things limit that.

In contrast, the less formalized approaches in the other districts tend to be more ad hoc, with officers speaking to known groups on an informal basis, whilst offering input to policy documents from more established elites. Engagement with universities was not seen to be a widespread issue, outside Manchester and Salford where the universities are clustered.

The issue of metrics, measurements and targets was raised in interviews. It was noted that the previous Government had cascaded a number of targets for addressing climate change to city-regions which provided impetus both for the initial formation of the Low Carbon Hub itself and for local authority investment in this area. Interviewees noted the challenges of implementing national directives and responding to pressures from 'above'. There was some indication that national pressures had now reduced since the arrival of the Coalition government. However, this was seen to have both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, the city-regional level has become more significant as a driver of local priorities than previously, allowing for greater ownership of the agenda.

However, it was also noted that statutory regulations passed down from national government had the effect of galvanizing support for the climate change agenda – in the absence of clear national support for this agenda, interviewees expressed the fear that local authorities may not continue to prioritize investment in this area in a context of austerity and public sector reform.

Contesting the Challenges: unlike the workshops, interviewees were asked to directly comment on the challenges identified in the Baseline Assessment (Table 2). The

interviews therefore also provided a mechanism for contesting these challenges. In particular, the following issues were contested by a number of interviewees:

- That sustainable urban development requires a city-regional scale approach and that a localist focus is a problem;

It was felt that greater clarity is needed on which issues need to be addressed at which scales. Localism and diversity were seen as strengths, particularly in connecting between policy agendas and with grassroots community activity.

- That the absence of a single GM governance body for sustainable urban development is an issue;

There was a general suspicion of more structural solutions and the proliferation of formal bodies. Informal ways of working were seen as equally, if not more, beneficial and relevant to day-to-day roles and responsibilities.

- That GM needs to directly connect with citizens

Some interviewees expressed the opinion that it did not matter that 'Greater Manchester' as a scale of activity is neither relevant nor resonant for citizens. Rather, the issue is to better utilise the relationship management mechanisms of the districts to engage with local groups.

- That there needs to be a 'single evidence base' or a repository for research

Whilst it was agreed that local authorities could better share their evidence base and data, the view was also expressed that compiling a single evidence base was a potential waste of time and resource and could never be achieved. Rather the emphasis should be on finding smarter ways to work collaboratively.

THE VIEW FROM THE GROUND

SARF produced an extended report summarising and synthesising the discussions from the three focus groups around the areas of governance, policy and knowledge. SARF have also produced a discussion article which has been reproduced on Platform <http://ontheplatform.org.uk/article/co-producing-sustainable-urban-development>

Governance – the issues raised were not limited to the Low Carbon Hub, but to city-regional governance structures as a whole. In relation to transparency, communication and engagement, the participants noted a strong democratic deficit at the Greater Manchester level. The purpose and activity of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and AGMA were felt to be poorly communicated and hence understood. Previous experiences of consultation had been negative, encapsulated in a wide spread view that seeking involvement that is not meaningful is more damaging than doing nothing at all.

The desire to be involved in the everyday governance of the Low Carbon Hub does not appear to be strong. However, organisations did want to be able to contribute their expertise and knowledge on specific areas of interest. Although the opportunities created through the internet are to be welcomed, it was felt that relying exclusively upon internet engagement is not effective. This reflects a desire for a mixed model of engagement with community organisations that includes online and offline participation

Policy: the focus groups reinforced the central challenges around the dominant focus on economic growth, rather than development, as part of the Greater Manchester Strategy. A key area that was explored through the focus groups was how to develop a holistic approach that can bridge the gap in thinking between economic growth and sustainable development in order to develop alternative perspectives.

For people living insecure lives on low-income, the so-called green agenda is often not a priority or even a consideration. However, the link between anti-poverty and sustainable urbanism seems to be a logical and indeed essential fit.

What emerged was a strong value base for activity, linking social justice with issues of ecological security. Preferred options therefore focussed on developing a sustainable economy and localising systems; building systemic resilience; creating small-scale experiments and sustainable enterprises and upscaling through a more organic and evolutionary approach.

A central tension was in how participants conceived the value of policy: at times stating that policies and strategies were irrelevant; at other times acknowledging that policy could alternatively facilitate or be a barrier to local action.

Knowledge – the focus groups considered that a professionalised idea of knowledge is limited. It was felt that there is lots of knowledge within communities from people who have direct experience and expertise, and that this is often not invested in, or used in a way that supports local assets and can create sustainable long-term change.

You give people perfectly rational arguments and they are dismissed; it diminishes your intellect and understanding.

Complex social issues that have remained intractable over many years cannot be solved by Greater Manchester policy responses that are delivered by the statutory sector alone. The concept of public knowledge was mentioned by one participant. This provides the basis of re-conceptualising the type of knowledge that contributes towards policy development. Community knowledge is not a substitute for the policy knowledge of statutory agencies, but can augment it in a way that will deliver policy that is more likely to be able to deliver on social, economic and ecological outcomes. Overall, a series of options were advanced, including co-producing policy and valuing community knowledges as an input to strategy development.

As a result of the focus groups, SARF highlighted a series of Options, which largely also related to the role of the Low Carbon Hub in acting as an ambassador for change within the broader GMCA family:

- **Option 1: Networked Localism:** developing the Low Carbon Hub as a hub for networked good practice and upscaling from hyper-local approaches into large-scale solutions.
- **Option 2: Catalysing Local Social Action:** a series of events for two-way knowledge exchange around key themes between Low Carbon Hub and the voluntary and community sector. Examples included the development of Community Land Trusts and the presentation and explanation of open data.
- **Option 3: Supporting Sustainable Enterprise:** there is a potential to deliver some targeted work with more sustainable enterprises to be able to identify the barriers and challenges that exist for them to be able to provide a policy framework that is more supportive of their ambitions and supports economic growth for the sectors that are more sustainable.
- **Option 4: Role for Low Carbon Hub in coordinating collaborative development of strategy on particular policy areas:** the Low Carbon Hub could coordinate a collaborative network on a particular policy area, such as food or fuel.
- **Option 5: Shadowing Scheme:** allowing AGMA officers and voluntary sector workers to spend time together to learn from the respective experiences and knowledge on the ground.

SYNTHESIS: THE WORKSHOP

On 19th November 2013 a workshop was held at the Biospheric Project in East Salford. The workshop brought together: representatives of AGMA/the Low Carbon Hub; local authority representatives; and members of community groups and the third and voluntary sector. The agenda consisted of a joint presentation by the Low Carbon Hub, SARF and SURF, interspersed with discussion, and a series of group break-out sessions on options for re-thinking the governance of sustainability in Greater Manchester. In addition, sufficient time was allowed for networking between the participants, creating a space outside the structures of daily work for participants to engage with each other and a core set of issues. The workshop acted as a mechanism for synthesis of findings across the three elements of work, as well as engagement and joint discussion of implications and next steps.

The workshop was shaped around the idea that 'the project of governance has failed' and there is need for a more practice-based, action-oriented approach. Instead of seeking to create new structures, greater fluidity, transparency and porosity is needed in how the city-region is governed. In contrast to the organization of the work itself, the order of the workshop was altered to move from an understanding of the knowledge base, through to policy implications and finally necessary structural changes and ways of working. The

central issues emerging from the production of the three viewpoints and the workshop are synthesized below.

1. Knowledge Options – Principles

There is a need to re-value different forms of knowledge and expertise in catalysing a transition to a more sustainable urban future. The message to guard against ‘policy-based evidence’ was frequently mentioned. This requires re-thinking what ‘evidence’ is; improving the flows of knowledge from research to policy and practice; seeing communities of practice and experience as co-authors of policy in development and implementation; taking risks and learning through innovation and experimentation. An important corollary is to change the language of the debate – to emphasize a politics of hope and not despair - to engage, inspire and innovate to create cultural change. The discussion included the need to interpret concepts flexibly and translate for different audiences. ‘Low carbon’ was not seen to resonate with participants and policy discourses, often written for national policy-makers or funding organizations, are hard to understand. One possibility for overcoming this issue was to develop an engaging narrative that could be commonly owned and developed at Greater Manchester level.

2. Knowledge Options – Practices

A set of general issues concerned the need to work with existing representative democratic institutions to build joint capacity and share good practices between districts. Cultural change within local authorities was seen as necessary to embed sustainable thinking across different departments. For the Low Carbon Hub, a central issue is engaging with universities, improving the use of case studies and qualitative studies and mobilizing the student body as a resource. Other participants also noted the possibility to move away from an over-reliance on consultants’ expertise to working with community or practitioner-researchers.

A second set of options expressed included drawing on community knowledges through virtual and online forums; community knowledge ambassadors; holding rolling programmes of workshops in districts; setting up stakeholder groups at Greater Manchester level; working with low income groups to creatively evaluate policies and how they might work and site visits of policy-makers and officials to community initiatives.

Participants acknowledged that there is no such thing as perfect data or intelligence. For some, gut instinct, learning by doing and gaining knowledge through experience were preferable approaches to assembling repositories of research. The need for open data was commonly expressed, with local authorities being urged to make knowledge available that could support activity on the ground – examples included mapping derelict land that could be brought into productive urban agricultural use, or listing derelict buildings that could be taken into community ownership.

3. Policy Options: Agendas

A strong desire for greater systems thinking was indicated by multiple interests, characterized by the need to re-frame the AGMA offer as more than 'green growth'. Whilst there were a range of tactics being developed to promote wider agendas, there remain gaps in policy agendas, notably around cultural change; inter-relationships with health and well-being and social equality and diversity. Overall a stronger emphasis on supporting community innovations and experiments and learning from practice on the ground was felt to be desirable.

Differences were apparent in those emphasizing a more community-centred approach and those emphasizing a 'wedge' approach, ensuring that initiatives target interventions areas where there is the biggest potential impact on carbon emissions. A consequence of this, for instance, might be a deliberate focus on changing behaviors in the private and public sectors, with a particular emphasis on the sectors, organizations and elites which contribute most to carbon emissions. Underpinning these discussions is the relationship between values, responsibility and action.

4. Policy Options: Formulation

A central issue emerging from all strands of work concerned the need to develop an enabling and learning policy framework. This would involve a number of elements including: cross-team working between Greater Manchester commissions; greater clarity on roles and responsibilities at different levels and across different issues; supporting local authorities to lead on particular issues and cascade learning for the benefit of others; focusing on action plans rather than strategies; linking expectations to a realistic evaluation of capacity and resource; and focussing on removing barriers to developing projects and actions, rather than developing policy from the top-down drawing on professionalised expertise.

This latter aspiration was encapsulated in the concept of 'letting 1000 flowers bloom' through community experiments and initiatives, whilst creating spaces for learning, networking and replicating good practice. A question related to what the relevant role for formal governmental organisations is – and whether experimentation and innovation can only happen organically or can be catalysed by particular forms of action.

5. Governing Options: Working with Communities

There was a widespread agreement that sharing experiences of working with community groups across local authorities would be beneficial, with a particular emphasis on learning from the Manchester: A Certain Future model. It was noted that there is great fragmentation and atomization of third and voluntary sectors interests with competition as well as collaboration between initiatives. Consequently, the fragmented knowledge base with multiple points of contact can be seen as a barrier to working with community groups.

Greater clarity is needed on two key issues: firstly, the difference between transparency, communication and engagement. Many participants agreed that public organizations

must be transparent about their priorities, investments and activities so that interested citizens are able, if they wish, to easily understand developments at city-regional level. Linked to this is the need for active and appropriate communication of what different organizations are doing, in forms and language that connects with residents. These functions were seen as basic essentials of a democratic system and core responsibilities of those in public office. Engagement, however, requires greater consideration with both positive and negative aspects. Consultation for its own sake is not desirable and engagement has to be relevant to the issues and timely – at a point at which inputs can influence decisions being taken. The general principle of a more ‘localist’ approach appeared to have greater support from participants, with the emphasis being on ‘driving democracy down, not concentrating power up’. Rather than structural solutions, a preference for self-sustaining and self-replicating networks was expressed.

6. Governing options – the Low Carbon Hub and the districts

A strong message emerged from across the streams of work on the need to re-frame the Low Carbon Hub from steering to learning, enabling and coordination – becoming a hub for ‘networked good practice’. At the same time, for some, there was acknowledgement that the political-economic project of ‘Greater Manchester’ was a necessary evil and that the current national climate requires strong leadership and positioning. Within this broader context, there is a role for the Low Carbon Hub in adopting a more integrated and holistic perspective and fostering ways of collaborative working at the intersection between national, local and community interests. Through the Low Carbon Hub, a ‘coalition of the willing’ could be formed, acknowledging that hard choices will require political will. A tension related to the role of the climate change leads group – with some suggesting a greater emphasis on ‘problem solving’ and day-to-day operations, whilst others felt the city-regional project was best suited to addressing the ‘big projects’ which could only be delivered via coordinated responses.

A series of other issues raised through the work included: having an honest discussion about the different roles and ‘variable speeds’ of the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ AGMA districts; learning the lessons from joint Commission working on food and fuel poverty; developing a role for the Low Carbon Hub in supporting European funding bids across the districts; giving a geographical lead to different members of the Low Carbon Hub sub-groups; increasing local authority participation in the sub-groups; networking with other existing groups such as Manchester Arts and Sustainability Team and the Poverty Commission; encouraging secondments, placements and exchanges between the districts and the Low Carbon Hub – and potentially across Commissions.

REFLECTIONS

Through the GAPS project, an innovative action-research project has been formulated at the intersection of research, policy and practice agendas. The four individual reports provide a rich vein of data that requires further analysis and reflection.

The options advanced by different groups can be analysed according to the extent to which they support the status quo, suggest minor changes and adaptation or full-scale system transformation. Options were advanced which supported incremental to radical governance innovations. Whilst the Low Carbon Hub options tended to be more incremental and work within existing systems, options advanced by community members and some local government officials can be seen as more radical.

Despite these differences, a shared value space can be identified between different interests. This suggests that a series of options can be advanced which do not rule out widespread systemic change (indeed make it more likely), but are also palatable to those within existing governance organizations.

Three areas of agreement in this common value space were:

1. *Governing together, not governing from the top.* There is a need to shift from formal structural solutions to addressing governance gaps to a more practice-based approach. This is central to avoiding unnecessary and meaningless consultation with community groups, or having engagement for engagement's sake.
2. *An enabling policy framework.* A traditional model of policy development would involve a relatively closed pool of stakeholders, and often draw on the work of externally contracted consultants. Across all of the case study cities in the project, it is clear that this leads to a policy implementation gap and a series of questions over the effectiveness of strategies, policies and action plans as mechanisms to bring about sustainable change. The challenge is to reorient policies around the removal of barriers to local action and the creation of an enabling innovative policy framework which supports innovation at multiple scales.
3. *Valuing different forms of knowledge and expertise.* Despite the emphasis on evidence based policy, only certain kinds of 'evidence' tend to be valued by policy-makers. Academic knowledge, sectoral and industrial knowledges are often prioritised over local experience, insight and expertise. A two-way flow of knowledge is needed between communities and policy-makers, with a clear sense of purpose and outcome.

NEXT STEPS

The next steps for the project are two-fold: first, to continue the process of collaboration locally in seeking to action the outcomes of the Phase 2 work; second, to begin the process of comparison with other Local Interaction Platforms in Cape Town, Kisumu and Gothenburg to understand how these challenges and options are reflected or challenged in different urban contexts. The project is intended to conclude in 2015.