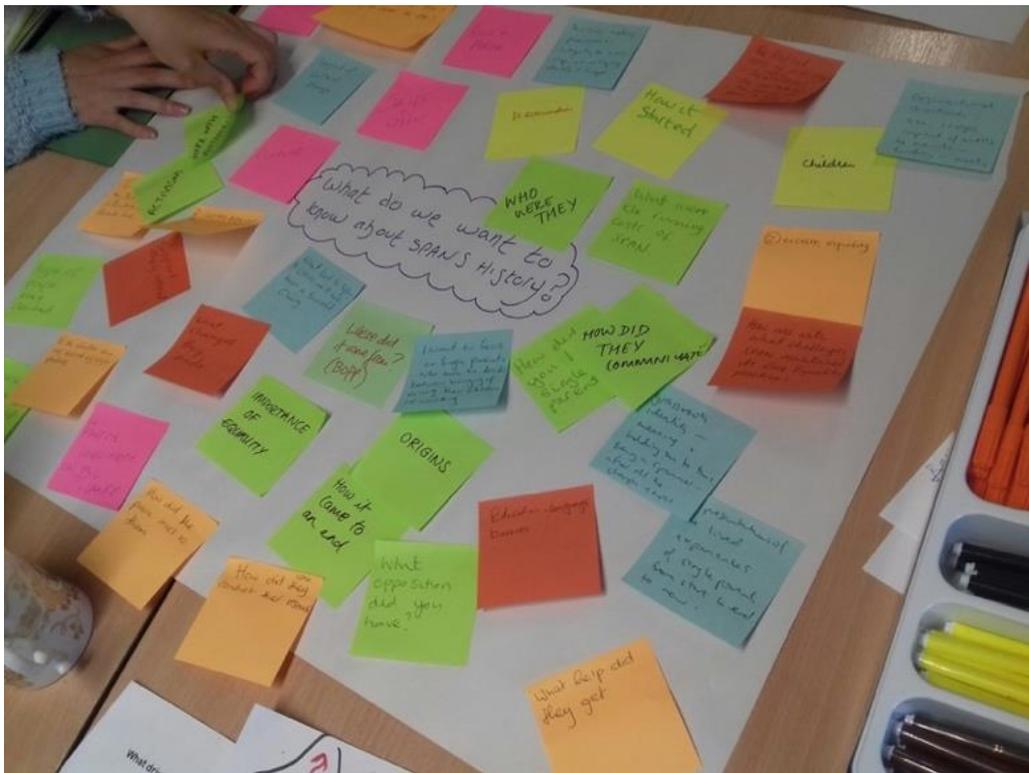


## SPAN: a hands-on history project

### Short Evaluation Report



June 2021

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**Thanks to** History Group researchers former staff and volunteers at SPAN and the project Steering Group chaired by Catherine Lecointe. Thanks also to crèche, reception and administrative staff at the Wellspring Settlement, Nicole Andrieu and Caroline's Creche's.

This is the short version of the SPAN: a hands on history project evaluation report. This document outlines the findings and suggestions for coproduced research that came from the interviews and observations with project collaborators. It concludes with the Steering Group's feedback on the evaluation findings and a list of their tips for co-produced research. The full version of the report is available at:

<https://cpb-eu-w2.wpmucdn.com/blogs.bristol.ac.uk/dist/7/542/files/2019/06/SPAN-Full-Evaluation-Report-June-2021-.pdf>

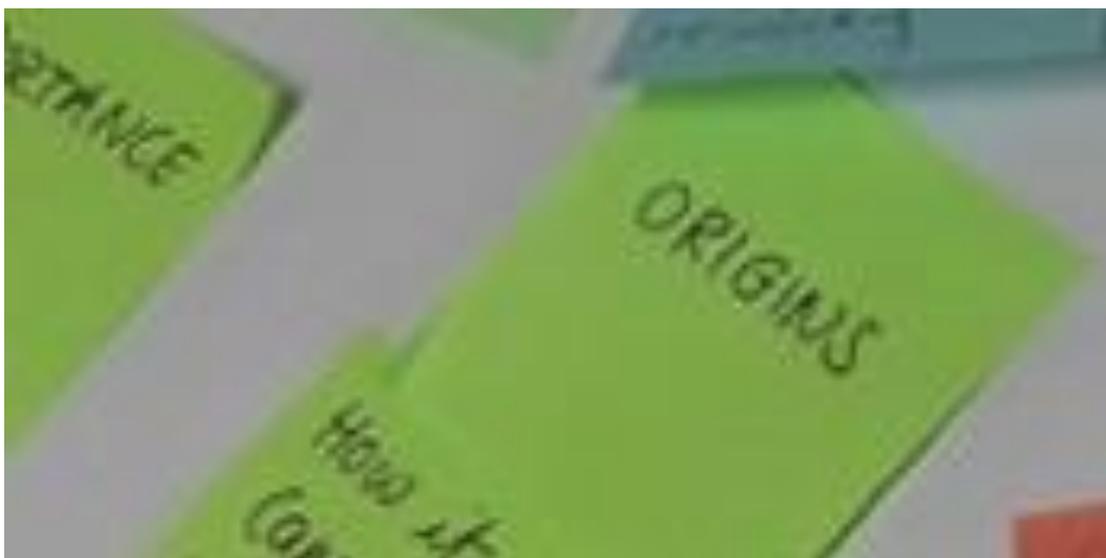
### Introduction

The history project's evaluation framework, developed with project collaborators in the Steering Group was based on the structure outlined by Nate Eisenstadt as part of the Know Your Bristol project (2019) (See Figure 1 in the full report). It focused on five main areas of enquiry:

- What do project contributors want to create?
- What do the project contributors want to learn or develop in themselves and others?
- How are decisions made on the project?
- What are the roles of the different contributors on the project?
- What are the benefits and risks for project contributors?

### Terms used in this report

- Co-production – collaboration involving: individuals/organisations/communities, alongside academic or professional researchers. This could mean collaboration which focuses on:
  - the overall management and control of research
  - setting research priorities
  - doing the research and/or
  - communicating the research findings (adapted, Holmes, 2017)
- Researchers / History Group members – people from the community engaged as voluntary collaborators on the project.
- Contributors/ paid contributors – community staff, consultants and academic researchers.
- Collaborators – contributors and researchers.
- SPANers – people who had an association with Single Parent Action Network as members of staff, volunteers, students or users of the project.



### Findings

This section of the report looks back at the project evaluation to highlight findings in five main areas: making together to leave a lasting legacy, the learning and development of collaborators on the project, decision making, the roles of collaborators and the benefits and demands of co-production.

#### **Making together to leave a lasting legacy**

At the start of 2020 the project seemed on track with several clearly defined outputs to complete and a History Group that was working well together and increasingly effective, but the project was significantly impacted by Covid-19. History Group meetings at the settlement had to stop and project activity was cancelled, postponed or transferred online. The pandemic affected the process of the group's ending and extended it by two months. Despite the interruption to the work brought about by the pandemic, history group researchers showed considerable pride in what had been achieved; this included: a mural, an online project event, a set of commemorative mugs, a series of oral history interviews and the cataloguing of the SPAN archive, project presentations and several planned collaborative research articles which are now in process. The perceived permanence of some of the History Group outputs was particularly valued by History Group members. Importantly, the group had developed supportive ways of working throughout the project which came to the forefront when Covid-19 and government restrictions severely impacted on the lives of group members.

Over time, project facilitators and researchers created a routine for meetings that became context for activity in the group. The regular check-ins, coffees, seating arrangements and food seemed essential to the work. For some researchers, engagement in the group was mainly focused on the social aspects of the groups including building friendships and having interesting discussions in the group. Others focused their participation on the potential to explore the historical topic. Researchers expressed gratitude and praised the methods for engagement. Some researchers appreciated the deliberately inclusive measures used to gain agreement and input from researchers. However, occasionally, researchers expressed a desire for more negotiation of the structures used by the group, whilst acknowledging the difficulties of doing this within the limited time available.

The History Group developed an inclusive way of operating which meant that researchers could keep in touch with the project even if they were not able to attend a meeting. Researchers appreciated this flexibility but irregular attendance was occasionally problematic for the progress of the work, particularly when important decisions were made.

For ex-SPAN staff, the backgrounds of History Group members and their ability to relate to the issues within SPAN's work were important. University staff were concerned that the work of the project should be well-received in academic settings such as journals and also generate engagement and interest from wider public audiences. There was concern from contributors who were also ex-SPAN staff, that the history project was more focused on the processes and methods used in the study, rather than the content of SPAN's history. A few contributors reflected on the university ethics requirements and questioned its timing and length within the History Project. The project Steering Group included all project contributors with an invitation to History Group members to attend the meetings. At the time of writing, the group had met five times as a forum for stakeholders to oversee and support the project to achieve its aims.

### Learning and development

Researchers' motivations to join the group covered different aspects of personal development. Whereas some were focused on developing their skills or intellect, others had more precise aims of wanting to develop or change their careers. The status of the University of Bristol as a prestigious and well-known institution was also a feature that had led to participation in the project. The subject matter of SPAN and single parenting was also an important factor attracting potential researchers to the project; a few researchers, who were single parents, said that the topic area had attracted them to the project. The politics of SPAN was also mentioned as a factor which drew people in and sparked their interest in knowing more about the organisation and researchers valued the chance to learn more about their community. However, the research topic was also a potential barrier to some people's engagement, either because researchers believed they needed to be single parents to be in the group or because the identity of 'single parent' did not feel applicable to their situation.



Researchers' learning on the project covered a range of areas including interviewing, archiving and organisation skills as well as understanding the process of a research project. Facilitators

encouraged researchers to

build on existing capabilities in their time on the project and offered extensive support to researchers to enhance the development of their skills. The experience of planning and attending project events provided points of focus for involvement that were meaningful and

motivating to researchers. Researchers spoke positively about the way that the initial stage of the project had included enjoyable but demanding goals - in particular delivering a group presentation at a conference which seemed to build confidence within the team of researchers.

The History Group offered opportunities for supported group and individual learning. There seemed to be a strong connection between researchers' independent development and the support of the whole History Group. History Group researchers kept up with the changing requirements of their role as the project progressed through each stage. Part of the responsibility of project facilitators was to support History Group researchers in understanding this developing role. Researchers developed their skills as the project progressed, and during the evaluation interviews many reflected that they had become more self-assured as a result.

Researchers were often able to point out ways that the group had helped them to develop communication skills. For those who were learning English, the group was a supportive learning space. The group was also a place to practice and observe group communication issues as they arose. Researchers often reflected on conversations exposing differences of opinion and background as a positive aspect of their engagement in the group. However, in the second term, there was conflict and tension in the History Group which was stressful for researchers and contributors. In managing decision-making in the group, facilitators were also required to address the feelings of disappointment, anger and anxiety (See Facer and Enright 2016).

Researchers appreciated the chance to find out more about SPAN, especially the opportunities to engage with people who were involved in the organisation. There were however criticisms from some about a lack of historical content in the project and a suggestion that the content was focused mainly on the leadership of the organisation. University staff spoke about historical methods as an important aspect of why the history of SPAN mattered. The use of co-production in the work was a central area of exploration. For community-based contributors the history of SPAN mattered in more direct and experiential ways. The majority of collaborators demonstrated a belief that history mattered and that the history of SPAN was also important. The history of SPAN was considered important because it had the ability to inspire or support change in the present and future. Former members of staff at SPAN welcomed the history project as an opportunity for that history to be told to a wide audience. A strong motivator for involvement of community collaborators was the concern that this history was being lost or marginalised.

### Making decisions

The activities of the History Group were partly structured by decisions made before the group had started. The application for funding had involved decisions about who would be involved in the project, the main project milestones and timings. The History Group was the key part of a network of stakeholders including evaluators, the Steering Group and SPANers, the university and the settlement. The History Group was resourced, enabled and yet also limited by the presence and interests of these stakeholders, that included the requirements of the project funders.

Power was distributed through negotiated processes and a variety of decisions made about how the research would progress. A range of methods were used to make decisions in the History Group: gathering ideas, combining ideas, presenting options and proposals, portioning decisions, questioning, facilitating space for thinking and dreaming, gathering feedback, voting and working towards consensus. University researchers and community workers left space for History Group researchers to make specific decisions such as which research outputs to develop. Activities where researchers could see that they were making a difference on the project seemed most valued by researchers. After proposing a structure and then facilitating agreement as to how a decision would be made, facilitators left final choices to researchers. History Group researchers were concerned that participation in the group should be on an equal basis with others and where voices were felt to be left out this was noted as an important issue.

### The roles of collaborators



The project involved overlapping groups of stakeholders from different backgrounds who had a high level of personal and professional investment in the work. Contributors were willing to engage with the complexities and potential difficulties of co-production. With differences exposed at the start of the project, contributors began to negotiate how the research would be done and who would be involved. SPANers were valued as important contributors to the project by members of the project team but the role of SPANers was a source of disagreement, especially in the early stages of the project with contributors having different understandings of their place within the project structure. Some contributors expressed concern that SPANers might be sidelined, or become merely 'objects' of study in the research process.

The roles of project team members were defined and noted in a project meeting at the start of the project. However, project contributors also revised ways of working as the project evolved and changed its focus. Open discussion about the expectations of stakeholders was considered an important aspect of communication, but there were sometimes differences in expectations of roles which impacted on the work. Contributors also highlighted the need for early discussion of the practical aspects of communication between stakeholders including expectations about, for example, the regularity of meetings and preferred methods of communication.

Several contributors held multiple roles on the project. In the earlier stages, some contributors found it difficult to define their own role on the project. Project members had worked closely together on previous research projects so that some of the university and community staff knew each other well. The project involved collaboration between individuals who had knowledge of each other's motivations and ways of working.

The involvement of the settlement was appreciated by all contributors who saw that it offered the space for the History Group meetings as well as the time of centre staff including caretakers, receptionists and managers. The organisation was also valued because of its experience and reputation in community development work. The availability of the crèche and of several centre-based community projects, including parenting classes and a debt advice service, was an advantage of holding meetings there.

Contributors highlighted the many resources and skills that were brought to the work by representatives from the university. Preconceptions about the university were considered to be a barrier to engagement with members of the public and community organisations. A potential disappointment or fear for contributors engaging with universities was that they might 'hold back' from using their experience to guide the research project.

At the start of the project, collaborators held detailed discussions about who might be invited to join the History Group. These discussions were an important phase of the project where contributors discovered each other's expectations and hopes for the work. Although essential, these discussions may have delayed the practical work of gaining interest and commitment from potential History Group members. The success of recruiting History Group members and their continued commitment to the project were considered major project successes. The role of the community worker responsible for recruitment and support of researchers was considered crucial here. An important feature of recruitment to the group was the opportunity that researchers had space to discuss the group and ask questions about what it would entail. These conversations were often initiated by staff who had already built

a relationship with the potential researchers; they took place at the settlement and other community settings. The provision of individualised and tailored advice that addressed issues like timing and childcare, seemed a crucial part of the project's initial success in recruiting researchers to commit to a year-long group.

The History Group needed enough structure so that researchers knew what they were being asked to do, but also to be open to researchers' input into the process. This seemed to be an ongoing challenge of the facilitator role. The diverse range of motivations for joining the group and the broad range of prior experience of researchers required a balance of different types of activity and focus during group meetings.

### Benefits and demands in co-production

Researchers often praised the welcoming tone of the facilitators, showed their appreciation



of the group and valued the opportunity to take the risk of doing something different in a mutually supportive space. Membership of the History Group involved researchers in unusual conversations which allowed for the possibility of gaining insight into the lives of people from different backgrounds. Several researchers noted that they had made valued friendships in the group and others spoke about the group as 'family'.

For some of the researchers, the History Group was a gateway to wider networks of support and interest in the local area. As the project progressed, History Group members became connected through other activities in their lives. Engagement in the History Group was a source of pleasure, inspiration and empowerment for some researchers. Most of the researchers interviewed seemed deeply affected by their time in the group and two researchers reflected on immediate impacts on employment – one on practical support for employment options and the second spoke of the History Group leading to a change in her view of the university as an employer.

Ten out of 12 researchers who attended the group had children who used the settlement crèche and this provision was undoubtedly important for the project's progress. Further, careful consideration of childcare issues in the timing of the sessions (for example, allowing time to drop children off at school before the group started) seemed important. It should be noted that although, the offer of childcare was appreciated by members of the group, using

that childcare was not always uncomplicated for mothers juggling other responsibilities and specific needs of children.

Offering food and drink were essential to building trust and relationships in the History Group. As History Group researchers were not paid for their time, these aspects were essential ways of showing appreciation and valuing the volunteers. The less structured meal and breaktimes were opportunities for people to get to know each other. Despite the considerable effort that went towards organising inclusive participation in the work, barriers to participation were still evident. Taking part in research interviews was identified as something that was difficult for researchers to balance alongside their parenting and other responsibilities.

Time was precious for researchers who could have a few hours without childcare in the History Group. Where time was felt to be wasted or not used efficiently, this was frustrating for attenders. Several researchers spoke about the timing of meetings as something that led to them joining the group. The timing of meetings within the school day was crucial to participation for almost all of the researchers. The level of involvement in the group may have been a dilemma for some group participants. One researcher expressed her desire to do much more work on the project whilst at the same time, knowing her available time was limited.

In the early stages of the SPAN History Project, researchers were introduced to the concept of co-production, to SPAN and to other members of the History Group. Some were attending the settlement for the first time. With both the university and the settlement having extensive administrative and ethical requirements, there was a lot to achieve in the first few weeks. In addition, the History Group were introduced to the project evaluation. Positive views of the initial meetings outweighed negative ones but some researchers were concerned about the group being dominated by more confident voices and about the initial pace of the group being too slow and lacking in historical content.

Contributors from the university and the settlement also noted the pressure of time in the later stages of the project. Several contributors expressed a view that they would have preferred more time for archival analysis and historical investigation on the project. Researchers were appreciative of the time they spent on the project but for some, getting to meetings was sometimes difficult because they were fitting it in with school runs, childcare and sometimes work. For some of the researchers, the History Group meetings did not easily fit into their week.

When the group was in conflict, researchers sometimes questioned their participation in the group. Researchers described how distressing and difficult conflict in a group can be and the need for space to discuss and resolve conflict as well as support at difficult times in a group's development. Contributors recommended an approach to conflict that explores differences and allows time for facilitators to observe the emotions and dynamics in the group. Most collaborators reflected on their emotions during the project and noted some anxiety during the work. There were moments of intense emotion on the project which impacted on the team.

Researchers appreciated the unusual and uncertain nature of the history project. For some researchers, potential for enjoyment on the project appeared to be enhanced by the openness and unpredictability of the work. However, when research volunteers take part in a research project where activities and outcomes are not known from the outset, they are taking a risk with their time and emotional energy. Trust in the project hosts and facilitators as well as the use of interactive and engaging discovery methods seemed to aid the navigation of these uncertainties.

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### Suggestions for co-produced research

Using the evaluation framework as a guide, this section offers suggestions for future research co-production. We acknowledge that each project will be unique, and we ask readers to consider the relevance of suggestions to their own circumstances and context.

#### Working together to co-produce research

- Facilitate discussion about understandings of research co-production amongst project stakeholders. Seek to gain understanding and (hopefully) agreement about who is involved in the project and who will be co-producing the research. If there are several arenas for co-production, ensure that interested collaborators are aware of these arenas and how they fit into the broader project structure.
- Consider the motivations for involvement of different collaborators and whether these can be communicated so that all collaborators have an understanding of the needs, preferences and priorities of their colleagues. Consider the balance of activity on the project and how time might be organised in a way that reflects the priorities and motivations of all collaborators. Communicate about expectations of engagement and involvement in the project including what level of engagement is required and if there are any boundaries to involvement.
- Consider the requirements of different contributors. Academic researchers, community partners, community researchers and potential research participants are likely to have different requirements for how they wish to be engaged with and included in the research.
- Consider what support and structures will be needed for contributors to participate in the project over time. Where project activities and roles are likely to change, take time out to review how things are going and give contributors the opportunity to suggest improvements to ways of working. Use a variety of methods for engaging with the research including in person contact with research participants if this is relevant to the work.
- If appropriate, engage all contributors in discussions about research ethics on the project. Try to develop a common understanding of the way that ethical issues such as respect for participants, doing no harm and consent relate to the ambitions for the project.

#### Learning and development

- Aim to provide a supportive environment with opportunities for individual learning and development as well as group experiences that build trust, skills and knowledge. Consider opportunities to gain confidence on the research project and how different activities on the project might allow participants to consolidate and practice skills that they bring to the work.
- Consider possibilities for accreditation of the learning that takes place within the co-production process. This accreditation could highlight transferrable as well as specialist research skills. Consider other ways to support participants who wish to develop their learning once the project has ended.
- Consider planning an event or activity in the early part of the project; this will be an opportunity for team-building. If possible include activities designed to enhance researchers' understanding of the proposed work as well as develop communication skills and experience of working together on the project.

## Evaluation of SPAN: a hands-on history project (short report)

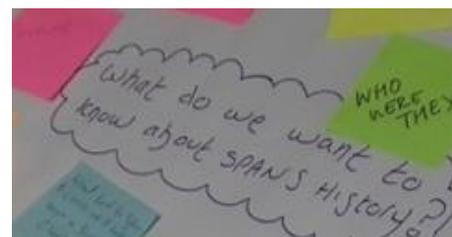
- Consider how to ensure that the administrative and evaluative aspects of the project do not dominate the research activity and, where there are opportunities for learning within these processes, ensure that these are highlighted.
- Facilitators of similar work could consider starting a project with a 2-4 week taster course where requirements for administration, ethics and consent might be more manageable. This could be followed by a process of gaining full consent to take part in further work.
- Facilitators might also consider introducing more subject content into the group from day one. Shifting the balance only slightly might be more enjoyable and provide inspiration to community researchers.

### Making decisions

- Consider a range of options for collaborators to make decisions during the co-produced research and, where relevant, engage participants in deciding which methods might be used in different situations. Check-in with collaborators to see how comfortable they are with decisions that have been made on the project.
- Clarify the boundaries of decision-making to contributors including, which decisions are made in which forums and what decisions have previously been made during early project planning. Where necessary, prioritise the decisions that are made in collaborative settings so that there is an acceptable balance between planning and doing the work. Recognise the time required for effective joint decision-making and prioritise decisions to be made in within co-production forums. Consider where and when different collaborators might be most needed to guide the progress of the project.

### The roles of collaborators

- Communicate the purpose and expectations of roles on the project. Support collaborators to understand that the focus of the work is likely to change over time and try to ensure that any changes are communicated to relevant people.
- Aim to develop ways of working that are communicated, understood and agreed. There may be times when ways forward may seem unclear to collaborators. Well communicated structures and ways of working may help to guide participants through uncertainties within the project.
- Set aside time in the project for discussing approaches to, and roles in, facilitation. Allow time to debrief after meetings and opportunities for planning forthcoming sessions. Facilitating groups alongside colleagues is a skilled task requiring sensitivity and trust between facilitators and the group. Ensure that there is space to discuss and monitor roles in the group so that facilitation can be responsive to collaborators.
- Consider allowing space for flexibility so that where appropriate, community researchers can be supported to input into the process as well as the outputs of co-produced research.
- Consider how the project can encourage people from different backgrounds to be involved. This could include people who have had difficulty accessing training and education opportunities and people who have English as an additional language. The SPAN History Project had success in recruitment because it discussed the possible barriers to participation at



length. Project staff held several conversations with potential attenders to allow them to find out about the group and to ask questions.

- Allow time in planning sessions for discussions about how to tackle inequalities in the group. The issue of who takes up airtime in groups is a sensitive one, but it is also a difficulty which occurs in most group settings. It is also relevant to consider wider structural inequalities including 'race', gender and sexuality, class and disabled/non-disabled status etc. and also to the power and influence awarded to those who hold a professional status.
- Consider opportunities for community participants to have different roles and responsibilities on the research project. These could connect to researchers' interests, skills and motivations. Consider what strategies might be used to ensure that all group members are able to learn and contribute at an appropriate pace. Consider the balance of activity for people with a substantial experience of research compared to those who have very little experience. These suggestions will need to be balanced against offers of group activities which can build a team and support group development.
- Consider including clear goals for the early stages of the work so that contributors have a sense of purpose and the feeling of making a contribution. These might also be helpful for building trust and developing working relationships.

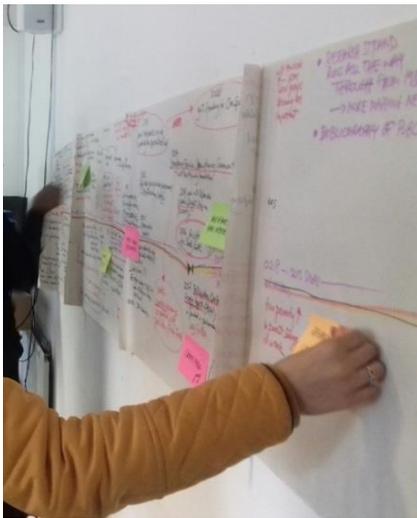
### Benefits and demands in co-production

- Consider highlighting potential career opportunities for contributors in the publicity for community research or co-production opportunities. Present a comprehensive 'offer' of the variety of potential benefits for individuals. The SPAN History Project seemed to offer a lot of opportunity for self-development and empowerment.
- If possible, provide the option of on-site childcare for research volunteers. Consider the time that will be needed to settle children into crèche provision and to collect them afterwards when planning session times. Where appropriate, consider alternative arrangements for people who are not able to use the childcare provided. (For example, where a child attends specialist childcare provision.) Consider the timing of meetings and, if possible, discuss this with potential participants.
- If diversity within the group is to be prioritised, develop early strategies for how this will be achieved. This could include targeted recruitment with local community organisations. Support opportunities for researchers to develop communication skills and cultural sensitivity within the project.
- Consider setting aside time for the less structured conversations that may help to build trust amongst collaborators. The development of friendships and mutual support within co-produced work can be an important benefit for contributors. Where a group is going through a period of conflict, consider any needs for additional support for collaborators.
- Involve collaborators in decisions about how non-attenders to group meetings might be able to contribute to the work. Consider the different ways that contributors might be involved in the research – for example using remote methods such as email and WhatsApp if they are unable to attend group meetings.
- Ensure that contributors are given feedback and shown the value of their contributions to the work. For contributors who are not paid, this might include gifts, lunches and work references which describe their contribution to the study.

## Feedback from the Steering Group on the Evaluation Report (January 2021)

At the last Steering Group meeting (attended by consultants, University and Barton Hill representatives but not History Group researchers), we asked those who had been deeply involved in the 'SPAN A Hands On History' project to offer their reflections on the draft evaluation report and what struck them as they read it and if it chimed with their own experience of being involved in the project. We were interested in identifying what rang true, whether anything didn't ring true, and whether there were any glaring gaps in the report.

### 1. IS THERE ANYTHING IN THE REPORT THAT SEEMS VERY TRUE FOR YOU ABOUT HOW THE PROJECT WENT?



**The diversity of the researchers involved in the project meant that there was no single experience.** The value of meeting and learning from a diverse group of people was seen as one of the strengths of the project. However, such diversity also presented challenges. One implication of this diversity in motivation/experience etc. was the importance of thinking hard about how to keep people involved, e.g. the importance of having a relaxed chat over food for those looking primarily for the social c.f. those looking to get a certain job. Steering Group members noted the critical role played by facilitators in supporting all individuals and activity, as well as the importance of deciding that this would be a closed group with concern throughout to support inclusion.

**The importance of being clear with everyone about the knowns and unknowns at the start of the project: what is set in stone and what is negotiable?** Steering Group members stressed the importance of making clear what was known and already fixed – e.g. things like timeframe and total budget, as well as leadership structure and organisations involved that had been fixed by the funder - but then, also making clear what was unknown and very much open for negotiation. Here the critical issue was transparency with the group over what areas they were able to make decisions about. There was also a sense of the importance of being mindful throughout on the timeline to ensure outputs are produced in time, while seeking to balance planning with flexibility. The building of trust in and with the facilitators was seen as crucial, but questions remained over what the right amount of facilitation was in a coproduced project like this.

**The importance of experimenting with new forms of decision making, especially given the constraints of time.** Steering Group members noted the openness on the part of the group to experiment with finding effective and inclusive methods for decision making and communications.

**The need to acknowledge and normalise that co-production (and group working) will involve conflict.** Steering Group members recommended the importance of giving people

tools to deal with conflict. In this particular project, these could helpfully be used to manage tensions between different stakeholders and the also the multiple roles of former SPANers.

**The role of the evaluator across the whole course of the project was seen as extremely important.** They ensured that everyone's voices were heard and could feedback and act as a critical friend throughout the project and not simply at the end of the project.

**The individual connections made with the history of SPAN were seen as particularly important.** These ranged from seeing SPAN's history as offering up a toolkit for activism to resulting in a greater feeling of connection with the city.

### 2. IS THERE ANYTHING IN THE REPORT THAT DOESN'T SEEM TRUE TO YOU?

**Statement about co-production challenging power needs more interrogation.** In particular Steering Group members noted that this was not a central aim when starting the group with the focus of generating new knowledge. It was clear that individuals in the group were empowered through the process, but the question remained of whether there are important differences between community and academic perspectives on challenging power though co-produced research.

**Conflicts and tensions tended to be underreported in the final report.** While conflict does emerge as one challenge in the report, there was a sense from Steering Group members that this could be foregrounded more and in particular by thinking about what we learned from these conflicts. Also missing were the complex emotions that were particularly important at the beginning of the project when there was anxiety about who would be involved in the context of SPAN as an organisation not ending well.

### 3. IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT THE SPAN HISTORY PROJECT THAT YOU THINK IS MISSING FROM THE REPORT?

**Reimagining co-production as a sliding scale.** Steering Group members saw the value of creating a timeline of the project that included how key decisions were made and by who as a way of thinking where the co-production was, and with who, at different moments of the project.

**Interrogating the role of ex-SPAN-ners involved in the project.** Who are they? Do they represent the 'community'? Where did they fit into the project? What is the impact of the project on them?

**Naming the emotional process of doing the research.** There were a number of key issues here, ranging from the felt anxiety of being evaluated (the experience of being simultaneously researchers but also researched upon) to the traumatic context of the ending of the project in the context of Covid-19. More was needed on the impact of Covid-19 on the group as well as the mitigation and support offered.

**The need to evaluate the outputs and not simply the process.** Steering Group members were conscious that the evaluation focused on the research process but did not deal with the end of the project and the ongoing work, nor on the specific research outputs created by the project team.

### Advice for future projects: Tips for successful co-production

In closing the final meeting, we asked our Steering Group to come up with a list of top tips for others embarking on similar coproduced projects. This is what they suggested:

**Be clear what the offer is at the start – a written offer was really helpful here.**

**Recruit and include a diverse team.**

**Include those involved in the history as researchers** – in this specific case there may have been value in broadening the research team to intentionally include SPANers and their lived knowledge.

**Build trust.**

**Be clear with everyone that there will be tensions.**

**Be clear and transparent about what is fixed and what is up for negotiation** – what are the possibilities and limits of co-production?

**Keep focus on the core aims of the project** – minimise process decisions to maximise time for the central research work.

**Set clear priorities and boundaries for evaluation.**

**Schedule regular catch-up sessions for everyone involved in the project.**

Full report is available to read here: <https://cpb-eu-w2.wpmucdn.com/blogs.bristol.ac.uk/dist/7/542/files/2019/06/SPAN-Full-Evaluation-Report-June-2021-.pdf>