



University of the  
West of England

## Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Co-constructing community wellbeing: Developing a framework to identify how student-community collaborative public space projects impact on community wellbeing.

- **Format:**

Presentation (in-person)

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

This paper presents a case-study analysis drawing on the work of the Hands-on-Bristol collective, a platform bringing together community members, architects, trainee architects, and academics to work together to make positive changes within the city. The practice of the collective is conceived of as a form of spatial agency which involves a community or not-for-profit organization to empower communities to participate in making and re-making their own places. Projects typically involve an ongoing process of community engagement, participation and co-creation through physical interventions in the city to bring into consciousness the conditions that shape a community's place in their world. The projects often catalyze possibilities that seemingly

cannot otherwise be unlocked within the public realm and have potential to impact community wellbeing.

The research is underpinned by Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (1985) which makes a connection between the basic physiological need for competence (the innate desire to feel effective when interacting with the surrounding environment) and the way in which the projects empower communities. Drawing on South et al's theory of change for building community wellbeing (2017) as a model, we analyse case studies from the 30+ live community architecture projects that the collective has run in the last 5 years to tease out the ways in which the work might impact on community wellbeing. The projects are mapped against five aspects of community wellbeing: Community conditions; interventions; mechanisms of change; intermediate outcomes; and long-term outcomes. The research identifies a positive impact for these projects, but highlights the complexities of real world timeframes and negotiating with the structures of power. The physical artefact(s) resulting from these projects emerge as secondary to the enhanced community conditions created through a community-engaged process.

#### **References:**

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behaviour*. New York: Plenum Press.

South, J., Abdallah, S., Bagnall, A-M, et al (2017). *Building community wellbeing – an initial theory of change*. Liverpool: University of Liverpool

#### **• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Dr Rachel Sara is Associate Professor in Architecture and Programme Leader for the Master of Architecture degree at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK. Her research particularly explores 'other' forms of architecture, particularly through hands-on, community based architectural activism (see <http://www.hands-on-bristol.co.uk>).

Dr Matthew Jones is an architect with expertise in making places and communities. He is senior lecturer and programme leader for BSc Architecture at the University of the West of England, a partner at Coombs Jones Architects, an Advocate in Practice for the Design Commission for Wales and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.