

Overview

This one-day workshop explores systems change as a relational, place-based and evolving practice, rather than as a fixed set of methods or guidelines that can be followed. At a time when participation is increasingly institutionalised, formalised, and instrumentalised, the event asks: **what does it mean to work in participatory ways that are genuinely responsive to power, people, and place?** This inquiry aims to centre themes of temporality, participation as relational work and power relations in systems change.

We aim to create spaces for reflexive inquiry, collective sense-making and meaningful connections around this question, inviting those working within, across and between research, practice and policy systems change work. This one day symposium is designed for **researchers, practitioners, policymakers and activists** working within place-based and participatory work from all realms of inquiry.

The ticket price is **£25** and includes lunch, tea, coffee and zine material. Please see information below about available travel bursaries. We are limiting attendees to 30 participants to ensure a convivial setting where meaningful connections can be made.

Details about the day

We will be undertaking **collective inquiry** and **sense-making activities** throughout the day including **offerings and provocations from our provocateurs, structured discussion sessions**, and by synthesising our learning at the end of a day through a participatory method – **zine-making**.

Estimated Itinerary

10.00am — 10.30am — Registration opens / Tea & coffee

10.30am — 11.00am — Welcome & coming into relation

11.00am — 1.00pm — Offerings and provocations from Indy Johar (Dark Matter Labs), Camilla Buchanan (PolicyLab), Charlotte Boddy (Environmental Change Institute, Oxford University) and Lisa Clarke (Practical Governance Collective)

1.00pm — 2.00pm — Lunch

2.00pm — 3.00pm — 'Fireside' collective inquiry

3.00pm — 3.15pm — Tea & coffee break

3.15pm — 5.00pm — Thinking with your hands: Zine-making as sense-making

5.00pm — 5.15pm — Closing

5.15pm onwards - Pub in Kensington/Hyde Park if weather is nice!

Throughout the day, we will explore themes such as:

- Dimensions of temporalities
 - *How do we work with different temporalities of place (seasonal, generational, political, institutional) when doing systems change work?*
 - *How might longer-term process-based practice replace dominant shorter-term project-based approaches?*
 - *Could different understandings and embodiments of time and temporality assist systems change work?*

- Participation as Relational Work
 - *Whose emotional, relational and care-full labour sustains participatory systems change?*
 - *What does it mean to design for trust, humility, and continuity rather than outcomes, outputs and deliverables?*
 - *How do we stay accountable to our relationships when, for example, project and funding cycles mismatch?*

- Power Relations in Systems Change?
 - *How do we overcome institutional, political and social logics that continue to inhibit 'power with' approaches?*
 - *What forms of power are the hardest to surface and/or disrupt in place-based work, and why?*
 - *How do we encourage reflexivity and literacy of the different dimensions of power to enable systems change?*

Provocateurs

- **Indy Johar** — Indy is co-founder of Dark Matter Labs and of the RIBA award winning architecture and urban practice Architecture00. He is also a founding director of Open Systems Lab, seeded WikiHouse (open source housing) and Open Desk (open source furniture company).

He is on the advisory board for the Future Observatory and is part of the committee for the London Festival of Architecture. He is also a fellow of the London Interdisciplinary School. Indy was a non-executive international Director of the BloxHub, the Nordic Hub for sustainable urbanization.

Indy was 2016-17 Graham Willis Visiting Professorship at Sheffield University. He was Studio Master at the Architectural Association - 2019-2020, UNDP Innovation Facility Advisory Board Member 2016-20 and RIBA Trustee 2017-20.

He was awarded the London Design Medal for Innovation in 2022 and an MBE for Services to Architecture in 2023.

- **Camilla Buchanan** — Camilla is the co-Head of the UK Policy Lab. The Policy Lab is a multidisciplinary unit with a decade of experience working on some of the UK's most high-profile and sensitive policies - from the Windrush Lessons Learned Review to AI and

multiple disadvantage. Our team of around 40 comprises skills in policy, design, ethnography, social research, technology, systems thinking, art and futures.

Over the years she has been involved in different public sector design projects — as a Fellow of The Public Policy Lab since 2015, the first public sector design non-profit in the US, a Visiting Scholar at Parsons' School of Design in New York, and an advisor to the British Council in Mexico on the post-covid recovery of the cultural sector. She has also done work to codify the new practice of strategic design and some recent publications are in: *Flourish by Design* (Routledge, 2023), *Design and Covid-19* (Bloomsbury, 2024) and *Design for Dementia, Mental Health and Wellbeing* (Routledge, 2025), along with joined the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Design Strategies*.

She has a PhD in design from Imagination Lancaster at the University of Lancaster which looked at 'What is Strategic Design?', based on questions she had working in this small field as it was beginning to shape itself more than a decade ago, along with having first class degrees from London School of Economics and University of Bristol.

- **Charlotte Boddy**— Charlotte is a Research Assistant/Policy Liaison based in the Land-Use and Governance group at the Environmental Change Institute at Oxford University. She is currently working on an Agile Initiative sprint project exploring Equitable Place-Based Approaches to Environmental Governance in the Welsh context. Charlotte has previously worked within public, private, and non-profit environmental organisations, including the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). These experiences inform her interdisciplinary approach to environmental challenges, and keen interest in working at the research-policy interface.

Her research is particularly focussed on the intersection of communities and environmental policy, considering their dynamic, diverse impacts on one another. Areas of interest include environmental governance, food systems, multi-functional land use, and species conservation. She specialises in qualitative and mixed-method participatory approaches, and is particularly interested in equitable and just transitions to environmental sustainability, underpinned by systems thinking approaches. Evidence informed policy-making and evaluation methods are also key areas of interest and experience.

Charlotte holds a 1st Class BSc in Social Sciences from the University of Bath and an MSc with distinction in Sustainable Development from the University of Exeter.

- **Lisa Clarke** — Lisa is a senior leader, facilitator, and coach whose work focuses on participation, power, and systems change. She specialises in designing and facilitating participatory and regenerative approaches to change work that redistribute power and support more equitable, adaptive social systems. Her practice spans community, public, and philanthropic sectors, including work at Lankelly Chase Foundation and through Local Motion enabling place-based and cross-sector partnerships to navigate complexity, engage diverse forms of knowledge, and

develop institutional practices that centre lived experience. As a Partner at PG Collective, Lisa continues to support initiatives to transform culture, decision-making, and structures in pursuit of social and ecological justice.

Who are we

We are the Events Officers of the [Participatory Geographies Research Group](#) [PyGyRG] which is part of the Royal Geographical Society, based in the UK. PyGyRG is a collective whose members aim to raise the profile and perceived value of participatory geographies, and further the understanding and use of participatory approaches, methods, tools and principles within academic geography and beyond.

Travel bursary

We aim to subsidise travel costs for 5 participants for up to £50 and to cover 3 tickets in total, based on need and for those that do not have access to an allocated research stipend.

To apply for a bursary, please fill out [this](#) application before **March 6 2026**, sending it to Tatiana Bodnar (t.f.c.bodnar@swansea.ac.uk) and Alice Lawrence (al988@cam.ac.uk). Participants will be chosen based on need with stipends decided by mid-March 2026.

Application form for bursary: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uSD-e9nMhcRExkR885ePKfHwXxX30TYE0xRaH8w3Kj0/edit?usp=sharing>