Notes from Engagement and Co-production Working Group meeting – May 13, 2020

During our meeting we discussed:

- The need to have a conversation around what engagement looks like for our partners at the moment. Some filled out a Google Form on what kind of engagement they are undertaking and it came out that there are difficulties in substituting face-to-face engagement but also that there is a need to contextualise and reframe Pathways research streams within the new context.
- Meghan Winters highlighted that Pathways in Vancouver was and is engaging with Translink authority. However, transit is massively hit by this crisis that will have a strong economic impact medium and long term. Layoffs, financial uncertainty that is unprecedented, people are in a crisis management situation and simply don't know the answers to our questions. We may need to re-think our procedure of listening/asking questions about priorities because there may not be an answer right now. This is all in a context of great pre-existing relationships. What do we do in this scenario?
- Most teams are looking into how to adjust their research. Camilla and Frans highlighted that there may be an opportunity to engage with the public more broadly. Meghan highlighted that besides thinking about the next steps forward this crisis offers opportunities for statements. It shifted from a partner to partner conversation to making sure voices are heard. Should we move towards more advocacy, making our case clear based on existing data, and having a stronger voice?
- Majid remarked that our reflection has two streams. One is more procedural and concerns mode of engagement or accessing data in the current crisis. The other one is substantial and it is about the essence of what research is doing and how it links to covid-19.
- Emily added that because the world has changed, we have an opportunity to encourage people to take a broader look at the world, not just the crisis but bigger implications of our choices and lifestyles. There is an opportunity to talk about neighbourhood and environment in the broader context because all other support there used to be is not relevant anymore. The only access that children have to activities that support mental health is the neighbourhood environment. It springs an important reflection regarding how the neighbourhood is laid out what kids have access to in times of confinement. Children don't go outside to exercise but to play; and that is developmentally, physically, mentally and emotionally important. Raising awareness around those issues is important right now. There are opportunities for the public to reflect and weigh in on how the world could look.
- Camilla reflected that this gives us an opportunity to re-think our engagement loops also regarding society and their voice in the matter.
- Majid highlighted that we are in the middle of discussions with various partners and stakeholders, playing out issues of health, and for example in public transport discussing the efficiency in getting from A to B, in terms of times and cost, but also regarding equity. People had preferences before, based on some criteria. In London, now, people are and have been discouraged from using public transport. This action was supported broadly by civil society, public, unions and government for a few weeks. Now, however, we start ti hear a set of people motivated by concerns like climate change, arguing that we should still use public transport. Others would just focus on how the virus spread, and claim to avoid it at all costs. Others would look at it from perspective of different sectors/socioeconomic groups. Very different answers according to people's interests. Not taking into irrational reactions (such as drinking bleach), there are still multiple and diverse perfectly rational ones to consider, that can be more or less effective and have different effects and consequences. Ultimately,

COVID-19 has expanded the range of concerns that people have and equity is still key in this equation and at the centre of the discussions.

- Gary followed and talked about the potential or real value of co-production in the face of emergencies. In times of crises we get interesting dynamics where because the stakes are high opinions are strengthened, allies are formed. Is there a narrative there for new concepts of engagement? Where does co-response exist, how does it break down or strengthen relationships and outcomes in these situations?
- Majid proposed two options for how to take this forward:

    1) Very specific and sector based, short or medium/long term. This is what we are funded to do. How does one manage cities with considerations of health equity and sustainability in a post-covid-19 world? This implies a "sector by sector" analysis of different modes of engagement. How do we bring these together and how do these exist in relations to covid-19? How do we manage different streams of research for a city that's equitable in the presence of covid-19?

    2) Getting into the fundamental question of what sort of society do we want to have? A cynical point of view could say that we'll be as bad as we were. The crisis will be over, and we will still have governments that are good at keeping things flat (at best) or at making them worse and it's just going to be as bad. If there is an opportunity for change, though, if we were to think about a more resilient society, what is it we want and what does that mean for our city? Then there is the how we would do this.

- Frans agreed and pointed out that in a situation where the world is turned upside down we could be involved in co-producing what new issues are emerging. The next step would be to consider how you would co-produce the solution to these issues, how you could insert yourself in the conversation and what modes and procedures are useful in doing that.
- There will be a considerable recasting of the role of the State, with much larger state interventions, increase in national debt, intrusion in economies and all sorts of other aspects, including and most relevant to the project how cities are built and planned. This does offer an opportunity to reflect on more resilient outcomes and pathways.
- Ultimately, there is a discussion to be had within the group around how we engage our stakeholders. Can we push and ask the more fundamental questions? Can we re-engage with more/different stakeholders? Do we have new modes and opportunities to act and be part of a conversation in times of a crisis?
- Ying Long also highlighted that it is difficult to pinpoint an appropriate value as to how future cities will look like. There is likely to be an acceleration of impact of emerging technologies. This may lead to a new city structure, new working styles, new transportation modes. There will also be new and different issues: for example, in China, gated communities are being considered to combat the virus. This is challenging our traditional urban planning and social issues.

Moving forward, we will:

- Map things that are not going to happen realistically. Travel is unlikely, workshops are too but we should still be asking the same questions (how do you feel about X and Y) in a different format.
- Reflect on and present a modified plan for our research focussing on things that are within time and resources and COVID-19 reality.
- We are in a new era and we've been really focussed on the mode in the past, listening and working together. We now understand that the modes will change but also acknowledge

that the conversation today has been about the substance. What does a new city look like? What are the equity issues that emerge there? Can we reflect normatively on a deeper level around new cities? How we conceptualise equity and sustainability in this new context? We should go back to the original problem setting and recast it with stakeholders what the real issues are.

The next meeting will be June 3rd.