

2nd Episode

The future of community - how are we imagining community differently now?

gentle/radical Introduction

Welcome to Doorstep Revolution, a project emerging out of the heart of South Riverside in Cardiff and run by gentle/radical, an arts organisation based in the neighbourhood, and interested in connecting up culture, community, politics, spirituality, and healing justice.

Supported by a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund, this sound archive was born out of the pandemic of 2020 and 2021.

We spent time knocking on doors, hearing people's stories and finding out how our thinking about the future might have changed under COVID.

From homeschooling to weddings under lockdown, from acute isolation, to finding new forms of togetherness, these conversations with neighbours reveal questions and profound reflections on recent times and how we might wish them to be different.

.....

In this episode, we hear residents talking about their aspirations for community. How did the pandemic create new or different experiences of living in Riverside? And as a result, how are we dreaming of what we'd like to see for our communities in the future? From practical suggestions for improving our local streets and communities, through to our wildest dreams of what a truly sustainable neighbourhood might look like. We start by hearing from residents, Rob, Edna and Abbey. They share thoughts on the need for greater connection at neighbourhood levels, and their hopes for how they want things to unfold beyond the pandemic.

Rob

I think the feeling of just knowing that there's support available within your community is a big thing that I think should always be there. I think like setting up mutual aid groups early on and sort of trying to support your neighbours through something like this, I think is something that should always be there. And I think especially in a city, you tend to not have that kind of neighbourhood connection in a way... and I think it's important to know that there's people in your neighbourhood who can help you if you need it, no matter what's going on, no matter whether we're in a pandemic or not, I think it's such

an important thing. So I think knowing and getting people to know that other people can help them whether they're sort of friends or not, like just a community can come together, I think that's a very important thing. Yeah, it's so important to have that sort of feeling of comfort.

And yeah, that's something that has always worried me, what would I do? Because my family don't live nearby. And just sort of this idea of, well, if there was an emergency, what would I do? And I think now I feel more confident in going and talking to my neighbours and knowing that there are people around in the neighbourhood that I can talk to and ask for help. Whereas I feel like before, maybe I wouldn't have felt that way, or felt less confident in that. I think that's such an important thing. Just generally, for everyone to know that... they're never alone. Truly, like there's always someone around, no matter how small or big a thing might be like. And I think that's such a vital thing for a community.

Edna

I mean, Riverside is a funny area as well, a bit like Grangetown, you know, having lived in this area, almost all of my life and watched the changes in Canton, Riverside and Grangetown. What I would like to see for Riverside and Grangetown is a bit more generation and building up the community so there's a bit more community spirit. And I think sometimes with the communities, we're not integrating, like we used to, you know?

I think that communities are very segregated at the moment and I think that's probably down to funding, you know, and community leaders as well. I'd like to see our Caribbean communities - we've always struggled and I've always thought we were at the bottom of the ladder at the end of the day - so I'd like to see, you know, people coming together and working together as one. That is what I'd like to see. And I like to think that the youth have something to look forward to. Because again, you know, there's a lot, I feel for them, I feel I'm glad I'm not young, you know, in this day and age, I'm glad I'm not 12 or anything in between, you know, 1 and 40, because it's a very difficult time for them as well, I've kind of lived my life to a certain extent. I'm quite happy the way things have gone. And I still want to be here for another 40 years, 50 years if I can. But for the area, I'd just like to see a bit more community spirit, people coming together and sharing. I like the fact that it's a diverse community and I think we should be proud of that.

Abbey

People want to make big changes, and they want to do great things in the world, and they wanna, you know, change the world for the better. But sometimes you just have to look at the smaller things that you can do in your local area and the impact that they will have on your community. So just saying "hi" to a neighbour like that, you know, like I mentioned earlier on, the kids saying "hi" to me, when I'm walking into my house and telling me a joke, or something like that, those things were the things that made my day.

What it came down to is actually that small impact. And I think in our mental health services as well, that's something we have to remember because we can get overwhelmed by the need not being met,

and the lack of funding or you know, all these kinds of things. But if I see one person in a day and make an impact on that person's life, then that's enough, that's great. And it's the same within your community, I think I've really learned what it means to have a community and for that to be successful.

Stephen

What would it mean, do you think, in those words of being a successful member of Riverside? Like, what do you think that would look like?

Abbey

I'd know my neighbours names, I think being a successful member of Riverside would be knowing my neighbours' names for a start, being part of community groups, I think that would be a nice thing to do. Like, I can see that there are veg boxes sort of dotted around Riverside and I think somebody's done that, someone within the community has made that happen. And I don't know... just being a part of a group that want to improve the neighbourhood and want to make it a safe space and want to make it a nice place to be. And that's not to say it currently isn't, but there's always improvements you can make to areas and I think we shouldn't rely on the government or the Assembly to make these changes necessarily, when there are things that we can do that are small. I mean, within our neighbourhood, just like sharing food or helping out with chores that need to be done and there was a group that started last year, I think they're still going...

Rabab

How do we get to know each other more? And in a diverse neighbourhood, where over 65 languages are spoken, how do we connect more deeply to the richness of our varied experiences? Next, we hear from Kanaya, Priti, Isha, Abbey, Suen, Owen, and Tess, Sandra, Gillian and Andrea, and Helen Marie, reflecting on our desires to connect more deeply across our differences.

Kanaya

My dream for the Riverside area is an area that continues to be diverse, rich in culture, rich in its history, an area that is there for each other, our neighbours. An area that's invested in... you know, recognised youth provision, homework clubs, and something for everyone in the community. And something that everyone can value, cherish and be proud of. That's my vision of Riverside, really.

Priti

I think my vision for Riverside would be, because it's such a wonderful diverse mixed culture setting, and you know, that's what makes it so great. You've got the Bangladeshis, the Muslims, the Hindus, the Pakistanis, you know? Got a real cultural mishmash, which is wonderful about it.

And I think in terms of moving forward, post lockdown, what I see as a vision in this area is really sort of having more community based gatherings, you know? Getting to know your neighbours, getting to know your sort of circle around that area, having regular efforts to get to know somebody that could have been living 10 years, 10 doors down, but you never really got to know them (laughs) you know that kind of encouraging sort of proactive mixing, within the neighbourhoods, within the... with it not just within the street... within the whole area, and making more of an effort to do that.

Isha

I think somewhere where maybe there's like a lot of interaction, there's like a lot of things happening where people can involve, because what I've noticed, and it could be my problems. I'm not even saying it about anybody, it could be *my* problem... I am not somebody who would see an Asian family, and would initially go and approach them and be their friends... it's just not me.

There's another thing I'd like to say on a personal note, or that most of the Asian families that I've seen are mainly from Pakistan, which is fine, obviously, because my husband's from there as well, but then I have kind of felt that I don't fit in with them. It is the biggest... because of the difference in the culture. So although, I have, for example, and this is on a very personal note. My daughter, she's born in a Muslim family so she wears a scarf, she's 9-10, she heard one time in her school, some Imam came and told Muslim people wear this and she picked up from that and from that day, she said, "Can I wear this every day." And I said it's absolutely your choice. Whereas you've seen how I am (laughs) like, you know, like on a different note altogether. So I don't mind, I don't care. And I don't mind, I go and drop my daughter, my daughter's wearing a scarf and I am not. And normally it's the other way around. So these kinds of things, it doesn't really matter to me, whatsoever.

But then so for me personally, I'm not somebody who would go and approach them. I'm not sure how I would be perceived. Because my husband for example, he's got a nice beard and everything. So he has an image, he stands with my daughter who has a scarf, and there I am wearing jeans and T-shirts and jackets (laughs).

So I think more activities where there's a default interaction, where people who like me... who wouldn't necessarily make an effort, because I don't mind getting involved with things for example, like your project I, even before we started I don't know anything about it. It's just something I don't mind, what do I have to do, being in zoom? No problem. I'm not that picky where you know, I don't have this and I don't have that. My husband had no idea what I'm doing, like this, there was no interaction, there was nothing because it was like somebody came who asked me for a thing, they need time, it was something about community and I don't care and I don't mind it's, there's nothing wrong.

So I don't mind getting involved into a lot of things. But a lot of activities or something where there's like a default interaction would be something for somebody like me, some people it might not work but a person of my personality and my nature, I think that would help me, ease into the whole environment and the community a bit more. So I think that's the vision that I get, there's a few things happening here and there and you know, people, families are getting involved as per their convenience.

Abbey

It is the sense of community that I think I've learned is so important. And that doesn't necessarily mean truly knowing everybody within your community but just, I don't know, a sense of community I suppose is all that's important there.

Suen

There is a community feel on Wells Street. I feel like it would be nice if I actually knew everyone, you know, be nice to like actually know who everyone is on the street, like there's a few people I know but I didn't know everyone on the street. I feel like it'd be weird if I... (Laughs) I just knocked on everyone's door, "hello!" (laughs). (Voices interacting) I don't know if that would be the best way, isn't that weird? Yeah, it shouldn't be weird... just like introducing yourself to the people that you literally live right next to, that should not be weird.

Owen

I think as well... this guy Derek, he sounds like he knows a lot about gardening, like, I could ask him for tips on how to do stuff like that. But you don't do that anymore, because you just look it up on YouTube or something. Yeah... I think, like, we've got a bit too much information and maybe Wi Fi blackout (laughter). Do you reckon with Wi Fi blackout, it would probably get you to know your neighbours? Like, if there has to be another big bad event I reckon that should be it, instead of a pandemic, just have like, WiFi is down what we're gonna do?

Suen

That sounds so nice. We have to talk to each other.

Owen

It is like the opposite. It's like an anti pandemic, it's like, you know, how everyone has to be on Zoom. Now, it's like, it has to be like everyone has to see each other in person.

Tess

It would also take... all that weird guilt that I have, I was saying earlier about having to look up how to be a good person on the internet, and like you're sitting there in your bedroom, learning about how to be a good person. Like those things would probably happen organically if we had community on the level that it should exist, because we're meant to be in very small units, you know, we are animals. We shouldn't all be in cages with the internet, no. So yeah, that would be really nice to learn life skills about compassion and politics through the people that are around you, rather than just like - beep, beep, beep, beep. Yeah, tick box, I'm getting better at this topic (Laughter).

Gillian

I'd just like it to keep on being a community. I haven't thought it before, until now, and I think it'd be a shame to let that go.

Andrea

And you got to try to get people to talk

Sandra

Talk to people, and, you know, that's what it is, as I said, you don't want it to end. You want... Riverside is a good place. You know, when you work it out. To me it is because it's a multicultural area. And I think that is the main part of my childhood, well of my adult life and all that I'm teaching, like in the school with children, that is what you want. You know, there's too much racism and hatred in the world you do not want to have it. All being in it together, that's what you're asking for!

Andrea

We are all still human beings, isn't it?

Sandra

You know, that's what I want. I just want everyone to be happy and to, you know, all be together, help one another. And I pray to God, it will come. I really do. I think a lot of people have learned their lesson with this. I just... it just keeps going. I really do.

Andrea

I wish some people still think about some actions what they take, because some people still don't think before you actually do it or say it.

Sandra

But I just think it's... I just want to see that, you know, everybody happy, that is what I'd like, love. There you are.

Gillian

I think the majority of people have learned something from this, and taken something from this and can give something from this.

Sandra

Oh definitely. You all have and as I said kindness at the end of the day, that's my motto.

Helen Marie

What I would dream for Riverside is, I know I mentioned that it is a multicultural area. I would dream for Riverside that people would learn more from each other, each other's cultures. And that there would be spaces to do that. That there wasn't maybe as much... I'm not sure if there's a disconnect, for example, I think there's maybe a disconnect from people moving into the area that maybe work near town in an office that just wants... and then there's people who've been here for 20-30 years or generations as well. And I think that would also be nice if people connect more with each other, and what people are bringing into the area now but also what people remember about the area and sharing that but definitely I would love it if we could learn more from each other. There's a lot of different people with different religions, different ways of living their lives, different colours and from different parts of the world. And also people who may be, you know, been born here, but their parents were maybe from another part of the world, so they're like... or their grandparents moved here. So, and I think that's what I would love. I would love personally as well to learn more say, how come I lived in a.. and have lived for maybe 20 years somewhere... Okay, maybe there was a gap in between or whatever... and I still don't know how many people in this area maybe speak Pashto or Urdu, or and how much of that language do I know? Nothing! You know? And it's like, what? Why is that? Why is that there's a disconnect somewhere and well, probably in quite a few places. So that's one thing I would love just for people to come together more.

And you know what? I think gentle/radical, when they had the Wyndham Street Centre and the morning that I went to the breakfast... there was a breakfast morning, and I came back so elated from that breakfast morning, I was so excited! Nothing really happened (laughs). We just ate food, and we just... but I met people from Riverside, I talked to people from Riverside, I met people that I was living around the corner from, maybe for five years, never spoken to. We were all learning about different cultures. That for me was almost like what I'm on about. Well, that is what I'm on about, those... that space for that to happen, where people can feel safe, because I know not everyone feels safe sharing as well. And I, being from here, white, and you know, I think that I am probably in a privileged position where I probably don't fear going to a space and feel that they're not safe, maybe to express myself or share my culture, whereas some other people might. And so yeah, I think that was amazing.

And also using we're so close to the park as well, maybe using sort of nature a little bit more or going on walks with people from the area, you know, doing things like that, but then also going okay, somebody knows about trees, let's go and learn about trees, because this is our park, you know, I can't... What's his name? The Marques of Bute, is that his name? He gave it to the people, you know, that park where we are. And we're the people who live the closest there really, well we are on this side obviously. And it's like, why aren't we used to life in that more as a community, not just as individuals? So yeah, so I think that would be some of the things.

Stephen

What are the practical changes we want to see in Riverside in the near future? A number of residents share their thoughts on what could improve the neighbourhood, from street cleaning to flood defences

to a Riverside library. Next, we hear from Rhys, two different Jacquelines, Sara, Phil, Martin, Becca, Tim. And we also hear from Abbey, Phil, Marc, Dylan, and David.

Rhys

Yeah, I'd like maybe, if people could consider doing journeys by kind of walking or cycling, instead of a car, so obviously councils kind of put that in place by doing the cycle lanes and that kind of stuff. But thinking with buses and taxis, I think initially people stopped using taxis. I've not been in a taxi for over a year. But I think initially when the pandemic came in, it was safer not to go in a taxi or there wasn't even any taxis at all.

So I think maybe if people could think, oh, well, I could walk to town instead, rather than take a taxi. It's easily doable in Riverside, you're very close to town. But I think there is a kind of a habit of people just getting a taxi because it's easy. So I'd hope that people's mindset will change a little bit and they think, "Oh, I don't need a taxi. I could walk" but then that will then just free up the city a bit and also to have less cars around and then in turn that maybe that would see more people in the streets walking around and you'd see more bikes, less cars...

Jackie

I think maybe the council could help a bit more with the street cleaning, because we do get a lot of rubbish hanging around in our streets. And maybe more for the children to do, you know, to keep them off the streets, give them somewhere to go. Like years ago we used to have youth clubs and things, I don't know if they've got anything like that now in this area. But when the kids have got to make their own fun, they don't seem to have much imagination do they? If there was something there for them to go to. So maybe, yeah, somewhere that would be good for the kids, to be able to find somewhere to go in the evening... I'm not sure if there is anything going on around here for them.

Jacqueline

They started putting up these closed community gates because the rubbish became so unbearable. I think something could be done with those areas, you know, we could have more planting of flowers. Look after the few green spaces that we have, you know, do something with that.

I remember they had a project in the Clare Gardens, and they planted some wildflowers in a patch. I don't know what happened to that, but probably disappeared by now. I haven't seen any but... So I think they, people need to feel that they can go outside and they can be safe and it's a nice area to sit outside. You don't feel threatened or, you know, that sort of thing. And I think there's a lot of projects done in Riverside that are good.

I used to love going to the Warehouse, you know and see the films, that's still happening. And then we... even in Butetown, we used to go to the Bute Community Centre, on the bus, with everybody on the bus and people talk to each other. And I think those things have to continue, you know, have to... sort of community feels closer together. That's what I'd like to see.

I think I always think that when people are poor, when they don't have much money, they feel they're not worth it. You know, and they should be feeling I'm worth it, you know, I live in this place, and I can make it really, really attractive, you know, and grow things. And so when people come to the area, they can say, oh, that's really nice, here, you know. That's what I think, you know, civil sort of imagination...

Sara

I would love it to be more greener. Definitely. You know, the flooding last February, was it February 2020? That was actually really scary. When you saw how much the river had risen and flooded in Bute Park. You know, it did make me a bit worried because all of Riverside flooded in the 70s. And I don't think it was like, that far off from coming here again. I don't actually know how much more the water would have to rise.

So I know that they're planning things, I think on Tudor Street to kind of do a bit of flood mitigation, where there's going to be green rooftops on the buses and a bit of those kind, I can't remember how they call them, like kind of lowered beds that kind of soak water up or something. And I think it'd be nice to kind of think of ways to do that. That would look nice as well around Riverside.

We've got kind of a bit of green space on Craddock Street, we've got the green at the end by the mural. And there's a couple of trees but sometimes it can feel a little bit barren when you're walking around Riverside and not very much greenery. That would be something really nice to see.

And I think it'd be really good for people to know about Wyndham Street Centre more and the Warehouse because I know about it because I know Maria who runs Women Connect First... so when I was not working a couple of years ago, she told me about the exercise classes there so I was just using all of the Bollywood and all the exercise classes and it was really nice going over to like the Warehouse to use it for that. But yeah, I feel like not enough people know about it or use it. So it'd be nice to kind of really make that more of a space as well.

Phil M

They could do with a lot more, a lot more investment in these parks, I think, and opening up other... there are sort of small pockets of land which people, individuals, are taking on themselves to develop small guerrilla gardens, but with a lot more money, they could become a lot more professional.

So yeah, I think investment in the parks, investment in the community centre, and whatever...

Obviously, a lot of people locally who do need a lot of financial or even just food support. The fact that I wasn't up to receive support, because other people were in a far worse situation than me. It shouldn't be like that. The food wasn't important to me, it was having that social contact once a week, and also be looking out for me sort of thing, I'm not alone. But it was that kind of contact, which was good, I found it quite good. And the fact that a lot of other people in the area wouldn't have received that. And obviously, a lot of people in the area do, did need it, and obviously didn't get it because of a lack of funding, that needs to be much more of that.

There should be more facilities for the youth round here. And they've invested on the football pitch, which is great. In the summer, now you see a lot of lads playing cricket in here, which is great. You wouldn't have seen that 10 years ago.

Becca

I just think the traffic thing, if we can crack that it gives us so many more options to do so many more different things. I would love to have streets that don't have any cars in them at all, where children are playing, and where the things are being grown out in the front, not in the back so that people do it together. I'd love to see that.

It feels sometimes that Riverside sort of misses out sometimes because it doesn't have a library, it doesn't have... There's lots of things it doesn't have, you have to go somewhere else. And it's not a problem for me, I can get on my bike, and I can walk but some people can't do that. And thinking about that, making sure the right food stores are here, for example. We've got the market, which is brilliant, but I know that the market are trying to become more community friendly and just trying to open it up and reduce barriers and that's brilliant.

It feels like every public area is "how can we get cars through most quickly?" And that's the wrong question. We're asking the wrong questions. We're doing the wrong things. How can this city be a really nice place to live in? There's got to be a lot of carrots, but the council has to be brave as well, I think. Bring people on board but work with people like us, who know people as well. And think about the way you go about things.

So yeah, so it's a greener future, less travel, we've got the subs coming into Riverside, hopefully as well, there's lots of change happening. I think it needs to be coordinated as well. So not just done by the planning department or whichever, or the engineering department, but you've got mental health services, for example, you've got general health services, which should be the same thing anyway, that's another story. Travel, schools, I mean, it's all interlinked. So you don't do one without linking in with the others. So that you don't do one thing, and then you've got unintended consequences for somebody else, it would be much safer to walk around and just things would look, I don't know, people would feel like... so at the moment, I think I get the sense that some people feel like their area stops with their front garden, anything beyond there doesn't... It doesn't belong to them, isn't theirs. And I think that's why there's litter and things like that, part of it. And I think if the people felt like that was theirs as well, which I do, then I think that would, that would immediately sort of improve things, but we have to make it better for people.

There's so many little things that need sorting out, you know, but the big picture is, it's green, there's birds everywhere. Look at me, I was imagining stuff. People walking around chatting on the streets, there's benches everywhere, you know, chess games going on, children playing, people growing their food in the front and all that sort of stuff that sounds so idyllic doesn't it? I'm sure it's doable. I am sure it exists in some places.

Tim

Yeah, I think I'd like to see more of an investment in local communities again, you know, we have seen that suffer a lot. Like the local Canton Community Centre, here just behind Tesco's, that kind of stayed open by the skin of its teeth I think, you know, it was gonna be closed, and it was only because there was uproar that it stayed open. And it's such an invaluable part of the community. You know, like a lot goes on there. Especially before lockdown, there were a lot of things and it was a good hub.

So, I think there should be more initiative, you know, instead of looking to kind of curtail these community centres, they should be looking at enhancing them, and increasing a kind of an interest in local community groups and centres and sponsoring them. And I think it's that there's a kind of a momentum that can be caught, as we come out of lockdown. There's that kind of, what we found as a community and what we've learned to appreciate should be kept, you know, nurtured, rather than forgotten.

I think it will be sad, if we kind of, once we return to some kind of normality, that everything goes back to the way it was, and people living their insular lives and not talking to their neighbours. And I suppose, unless something is done, we will see a return to that. So I think that any kind of initiative that helps us to hang on to the positives that we've gained through this last year and keep that going you know, in the community spirit, probably would be high up there for me.

Stephen

Is there anything almost in your wildest dreams, money no object, for Riverside? Like, are there things that you would dream for, for the area?

Abbey

There's, you know, things like art on the walls and just cleaning up the bits that make it look a bit dowdy, and a bit, as someone called it, grotty, just cleaning that up a bit. It doesn't take much ideally, you'd have loads of park space and loads of plant space, but Riverside is quite packed.

Like streets, there aren't really any other spaces other than just terrace houses, terrace houses all the way along. So there's not really space for more than that. But now imagining things like bunting and lights and all these things that make it just like a more friendly environment. Because I think we have the people that make it nice like that. But if you just looked at it, from an outsider's perspective, you wouldn't see that unless you were living in it. So you kind of want to show what is being acted on in the area and what, I don't have to describe it. I don't know if I'm making any sense, but what I feel from Riverside I'd like people to see that in it and not, you know, it'd be judged by being a grey part of town. It does seem compact in Riverside, it does seem like we are closer and maybe the streets are smaller, I don't know. And that means we're physically closer. Maybe we have that it can be something like that. I don't know something psychological there and in the distance for... yeah.

I definitely feel that. And I can't say how either, because like I said, the only instances I have found are the kids that are outside my street, they talk to me and the neighbours I pass and say hi or that kind of

thing. I mean, I've seen things like people screaming at each other on the streets, you know, in a fight you know, that stuff still happens, and drunk people wandering past or, you know, someone's got their bike stolen on our street recently.

There are things like that still happening. It's not all sunshine and rainbows, but amongst all that it still feels like everyone's in it together, no matter what they're, you know, experiencing?

Phil J

Yes, I think of some venues, arts venues, music venues, seems to be the trend in the centre of town that they're shutting down for various reasons. So obviously, I'm biased about this because I like to perform in venues. Yeah, music venues, arts venues, performance venues and that's a sort of beating heart of the cultural side of the city.

So it'd be, I mean, I think it'd be great if South Riverside could have some more of those. Doesn't even have to be that many really does it to... make a place feel more vibrant. But yeah, a couple of those would be wonderful to see. It'll be interesting to see if people do concentrate on their local area a bit more, like their local environments. You know, think about what they do want their neighbourhood to be like. And, you know, instead of thinking this is where I am, and I'm just gonna get away and go on holiday for now again, or whatever it is, you know, seeing everyone enjoying the parks, that's been really interesting and, you know, hopefully that's something that will continue as well, and people so sort of focusing on what they need from the outside world as well, like, I hope in the long run, this will be a good thing for venues and pubs and stuff like that, that people actually need social arts events, and nice places to be that aren't in the house where you can be social as well. So hopefully, it's going to be good for those kinds of businesses and those kinds of venues.

Marc

Riverside is a fantastic place, you know, it's like Riverside and Grangetown as well. There's a, you know, a real sense of community here. I mean, it would be great for it to become more so. I mean, the street party that we have here. Every year, the Riverside triangle, I think, it is a fantastic event. And perhaps those sorts of things could take place more.

I mean, it's an interesting question, because obviously, there are some concerns about what's going to happen? I mean, people I think imagined that we are coming out of this situation, and that it's going to just all go back to normal. And I think it's going to... I think there's going to be quite a few rude awakenings, as people realise that's not gonna be the case. And whilst things might get better, you know, I don't believe things will ever go back to being the way they were.

So I think that I am concerned that with the state of this government, and the kind of direction that mainstream human interaction is going, we have to rely on communities more and more. Because I, you know, I think that will be... I'm concerned that we will be sold down the river by the privileged classes, by the politicians, and the, you know, the people in charge, I don't think they'll be looking out

for communities. I mean, I think it's imperative that we do look to community and look after each other.

Dylan

I wouldn't mind where it would be positioned... But like, I don't know what you call them... Kind of like a stream of water, not like a lake or something, a contained area with water flowing. And maybe a statue in the middle or something. Someone who came from Riverside, made a difference. That was the first thing that came to my mind. Again, just keeping with the peacefulness of the area, nice secluded area of water, where you go and there's a bench nearby. Sit by it, relax, clear your head, clear your thoughts. That's the first thing I imagine, when I think about what I can improve for Riverside?

David

One of the things that I'm slightly caught up with is the fact that Riverside, Grangetown will be underwater on a regular basis, within 30 years, from coastal flooding, from river flooding. We sort of had it in Pontypridd two years ago, and I wonder if there's a way to take our community, so the way that we reduce the impact of this flooding is that we go and forest the hills surrounding the river that... that flows through our community. And I wonder because it's all about building, I think connections are important. We've got to connect, reconnect ourselves with nature that we're starved of somewhat in our cities. And I wonder if as communities we can go out up the river and be part of that effort that reforests the slopes that protects the land like the northern meadows, 23 acres of greenery that will become concrete. All that's going to do is mean the flooding is worse in my home, so can we all come together?

That's not the most pressing issue for a lot of people, but I think it would allow an opportunity for us to connect with each other. Like being in nature is clinically proven for our well being, but indigenous cultures have said this for 1000s of years. So like I take their word for it, you know, and it works for me. So yeah, like we can use that opportunity, like, okay, we need to do something about this. So let's go and do it. Let's go and plant 1000 trees, 100 trees, 100,000 trees, and protect our homes and 1000s of other homes. The council are either going to pay for bigger flood defences, or they're going to do nothing.

Isabel

In dreaming about building community differently, some residents talk to us about the bigger picture, the systems we are living under, and the problems they create, from questioning the need for perpetual economic growth, to worries about gentrification, through the disparities in wealth and privilege, right on our doorstep Richard, Helen Marie and Jess reflected on some of the wider societal changes needed for healthier neighbourhoods.

Rich

It's a tough one that, I mean, I think, as I mentioned before, it's a long term project, things aren't just going to happen overnight. Again, it goes back to education, to... the system of governance. This is more focused on the wellbeing of society rather than perpetual economic growth.

Possibly, I think this sort of centralised power is bad, again I had a quote the other day that somebody was talking about them, you know, power in the wrong hands is a bad thing or concentration of power in the wrong hands is a bad thing. And someone said, no, it's just the concentration of power is a bad thing. It doesn't matter whose hands it is in. And I kind of agree with that. So I think it really does start with more sort of devolved politics, so communities more in charge of their own future, of their own, you know, what they will invest in.

And so I think from a grassroots level, that's what I'd wish not just for Riverside, but for all communities really sort of going forward. But in terms of Riverside it's really colourful, it's kind of... very diverse. I mean, I love my kids growing up in such a diverse... such wide cultural things going on here. So that is really great. And, you know, everybody's kind of living together. So, yeah, what do I wish for Riverside... what I wish for the rest of the planet really (laughter) is more governance at a far more local level, and its sustainability, and healthier, happy societies, where we really do invest in the health and wellbeing of our society. It's not just big businesses.

I mean, on a personal level, I think the way the system runs at the minute is just doomed, especially predominantly in the Northwest hemisphere. Looking at... we kind of live in a capitalist system, and the kind of the neoliberal model of a free market, capitalism, and economy is just doomed, simply, for a couple of reasons. Simply, we can't have continuous growth on a planet of finite resources, it's absolutely insane to think that it's going to happen.

So I think coming out of the pandemic, we really, not as a society, but as a species have to look at the way we live on this rock, you know, and it's kind of not per country, but as humanity itself. So hopefully, we're guests of Mother Nature, we don't own her, we really sort of have to look at the way... I can look at the way I live, about sustainability, about you know, caring for each other, just kind of caring for the planet and for ourselves.

Helen Marie

Yeah, something that Ella reminded me of recently, she had a job with the Census, and she had to walk around different houses and I just think I would love it, if nobody got lost. You know, I think sometimes people get lost, and they get left behind and it's not their fault, or the systems are set up for certain people to thrive, and other people, not... so many systems, so many ways.

And one thing that she reminded me of... so she was going around, and she said, she'd forgotten how lucky she was, forgotten how privileged she was, and Mark Street is a really lovely street in Riverside and almost looks, I always feel like it's a bit more like it could be more in the countryside, because it's quite quiet. Not quite but it's quite quiet, not many cars come through and people do say, "Oh, hello" when they come out of the house and stuff, most of the time. But she said she was going around Riverside and she said some places... So some people when she was filling out the census said that they

couldn't read, and so she would have to advise them to get a family member to help her or something like that.

And then also, when she was going into some people's houses, maybe they looked slightly more unkempt than other people's houses and stuff, and that wasn't a judgement, she was coming back and saying, Gosh! There's a real difference between how some people are living in Riverside, and how other people are living in Riverside. And so I think in terms of that, if you look at the space, and that's just one small space, Riverside, in terms of the world, in terms of the UK, Cardiff, that's just a small space, how different people's lives are on both ends of the privilege scale, and the not so privilege scale. And it would be lovely to even that out in our community.

Jess

We're aware that we might be like one wave of gentrification in the area, and we're quite conscious of that, and we don't feel... It's really important to us to find a way to embed ourselves here in Riverside, and also to ensure that we're not a negative part of that wave of regeneration and gentrification. So I guess, in some way where we're trying, we hoped we would find a way to counter that stuff. And then in thinking what our hopes for Riverside might be, is that the communities that are here that have been here for generations would benefit in the future regeneration of the area. So like the streets near us, so...

Obviously, there's big plans by Cardiff Council to regenerate the area and boost this area that's very close to town and it's on the way into town on the way out of town. Me and Jason would just hope that those people that have been in this area for generations can somehow benefit from that, and not be pushed out. And that the communities here and the independent businesses that are here, can hold their own in that time of change that is about to come. In terms of Cardiff, no fussing about, Cardiff doesn't have a very good reputation for holding on to its local communities, allowing them to thrive in the areas that are regenerated. And so it's maybe a fool's hope, but it is a hope, nonetheless that those people could still have a stake in this area and keep their stake in this area and not be pushed out.

Tony

Finally, each resident we spoke to was asked a question about the future, what they might be dreaming of, for our Riverside neighbourhood. In this last section, we hear reflections from Peter, Jo, Shelagh, Seun, David, and Shanara, each sharing their thoughts on the shifts they'd like to see on both the micro and macro levels.

Peter

When being asked "what do I see as the future of this area?" you know, Grangetown, but this where we sit in and its surrounding streets. I mean, part of me does see a future where, well, they press the button, we all get nuked. Sadly, there could be a future where none of this sort of exists. I mean, that's the sort of pessimist in me. I would like to see a future where these terrace houses are still standing

alongside, you know, even structures that we can't even imagine now, and where hopefully, we continue with people from all over the world living in and sharing this space.

Jo

I was talking about a dream scenario, I would be living in a non-hippie commune. Really, you know, where we all just sort of chipped in, and there would be one...

So I am an illustrator, and I have quite a few illustrator friends, and we chat online quite a lot. Another useful tool, since the pandemic is being able to have that online situation. And when we get frustrated with work, or bills, or whatever it is, because it's not the most lucrative of careers. We will say, "oh, we could have a commune where we all live around this central studio, and the studio looks out over the hills and the mountains, it's got a little manicured garden around it." And so we all worked in there, but like, had our own lives around and there'll be a big barbecue, it's just a bit of a fantasy, isn't it?

It's just nice that I thought and I guess, on a more realistic level, that sort of feeling can be replicated. And I assume that's where community centres like yourselves come in to facilitate that kind of atmosphere. So I didn't know about your community centre until that leaflet that you left with me. And sort of looking online, what you do, the film clubs and stuff like that, I thought, yeah, this is a good idea. And hopefully, that can start again soon.

Shelagh

I am hopeful. And, you know, I really think that we will remember, many people, most people will have been impacted by what's just happened. One of the Pachamama things was about positive stories, and dreaming. So you just said about how important dreaming is and your dreams become your thoughts and your thoughts become actions. And so the Pachamama NGO says that dreaming is a really important part of the culture in this place where it was, and I can't remember which country it was, but it was rainforest culture. And somewhere in the Amazonian rainforest. It's important to listen to your dreams, and that in the northern hemisphere, in the West, we're bombarded with all this information all the time, through the media, through the internet, on the high street advertising, and we've lost the ability to dream. We're not dreaming, and that dreaming part of us is really important for the future. So we have to clear the space to be able to dream about a future. Everybody needs, you know, to know what our dreams are and to listen to them. They go to extremes and take those weird, hallucinogenic drugs to explore their subconscious minds don't they? Maybe we all need to be doing that and see what comes out.

Adeola

I love that as a recommendation (laughter)

Shelagh

We should have a big festival where everybody takes some sort of hallucinogenic drug and dreams the future (laughter).

Adeola

I love it. because it'd be beautiful, I think. And it was so beautiful. I got goosebumps when you were saying that.

Shelagh

Yeah, there was a bit on the Pachamama... so it was a few years ago that I watched it, but there's a poet and he's in the back garden reciting this poem that he's written. And he can't sleep at night, I can't sleep, being restless. And I can hear the voices, I can hear the voices of my grandchildren. And they're just saying, "why didn't you do something?" And you know that gets you! It got me, you know, and I must watch it again, actually, because it was really powerful. It made me cry. You know, it was just so meaningful, so poignant. And so, I mean, he said it far better than I'm saying it, in a much more powerful way. But, yeah, so his dream was a nightmare, because all he could hear when he couldn't sleep was the voices of his grandchildren saying "why didn't you do something?"

Adeola

In terms of doing something..?

Shelagh

That's difficult again.

Adeola

No but I mean (sigh) it's because I feel I know (sigh) I feel that desire to, we all choose our role in the revolution, right? The revolution or whatever? What can we do? Really?

Shelagh

That's the thing, how do we win? So we can't be like, you know, the soldiers who went to fight out in the Spanish Civil War. We can't do that sort of fighting, because we're going to lose. It's difficult to fight the media, because they're so powerful and pervasive. So voices need to be heard, and people need to speak out. And there are ways of doing that. I mean, Black Lives Matter did actually do it, didn't they? Very effectively. We're not hearing much at the moment about where it's got to now. But you know, it's inspiring when that voice comes through. And it seemed to me that Black Lives Matter was all about giving the voice to the younger generation as well, so that they could speak up. And that was like, wow, yeah, there's a voice and it did get listened to and it did make a difference.

Adeola

Yeah, it really did emphasise the power of the youth. Really, it was a huge movement, you know.

Shelagh

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And I was thinking today, there's something up in Hailey Park, I saw on Facebook, reclaim the streets, after what happened to the murder that was being reported of the young girl who was taken from Clapham Common by a police officer. So there's like a number of reclaim the streets protests happening in London. And there's one in Cardiff. I was wondering, but I hesitated. You know, like, where's the revolutionary? Or where's the change maker in me? I need to go and join that protest, you know, because it's wrong that women can't walk safely on the street. Or on the common and there's a lot to protest against there to make the streets safe. Yeah, I guess that safety is such a huge thing, isn't it?

Adeola

Yeah. And it came across when you were talking about your Riverside and the streets and what it means to be able to play safely, no traffic, but also drug culture and you know, how do we get there?

Shelagh

Prioritising play, redesigning the streets so that you know, they're interesting for kids to play on as well. Their needs don't get taken into account in urban design, not adequately I think. In Bristol, they've got a more of a play theme going on with more sort of street furniture that is suitable to play on.

Suen

I guess. I feel like I know I want to be in Cardiff for a bit longer, I really like it here. I feel like especially now I found this house, I didn't want to leave it just yet. But I want a better job, that's something I really want. Like the job I have now is really... is okay. The people are great, but the pay is not the best and the progression is not the best and the commute is quite annoying, long. So I would like a job that's a bit closer and a bit more well paid. And yes, that's my dream like job wise...

I guess I've also been thinking quite seriously about if I did get a really good next job like buying a house? I guess that's something I've spoken about, like, briefly, in the past, putting a deposit down I guess. Like, I've realised renting is such a scam. And you can't do anything that you want to the house. And it's so annoying. Like, there's so many changes I'd love to make to this house. But you know, I just can't because I don't own it, so it would be nice to have my own house. Obviously, it's really hard to do that.

Owen

On a smaller scale, things that we would do to the house, so we're trying to create stuff in the garden and that kind of thing. Like making the garden nice by trying to move from one room to the next. But

our garden is all concrete. And definitely, one thing is to have all this... like a lawn or something. Yeah, it's that kind of thing. I reckon like renters dream...

Tess

It is about space, what you're talking about. A utopic idea, is that word? Yeah. Of the future, includes having space that you can partly call your own or have some sort of ownership over? Yeah. Either by yourself or with the community. Yeah, with your chosen community. Yeah, you know...

Owen

And then another thing that I actually like, is so we have our neighbours that have moved to the street behind us. And they're three doors down, and that kind of thing. And we're really happy with how close we are. But it's like, we want to be a bit closer somehow. And there's a lot of ways that we've done that, we've got a walkie talkie, so that we can walk talkie (laughter)

Suen

...so that's what our friends who just moved into Renny Street, the battery's actually dead... But we have...

Owen

That shows that we have done it too much. Before they came, we were like, yeah, we'll get a ladder going from.... And it's really annoying... so the house. So they're two doors down and then the house which you could get a ladder into is empty. So it's like... we could just make that into a passageway into their house or something (laughter)

Tess

It is funny how like your garden, the garden situation with you guys is really weird, like how it's all regimented and there's concrete walls and breeze block walls. In Glasgow, I don't know if you ever saw this, but when you have a block of houses, in the centre of the block is a communal garden space, so they just ripped out all the walls and made it a garden so people from a community, and it's super diverse, all share the same garden. It's so nice, because everyone's flat looks into it as well so if you are on the inside of the block, it's lush!

Owen

I'd like that. And like, yeah, I feel like we could do with more parks and stuff like that as well. I wish that you were allowed to just do what you wanted in a park... not just like have a party or something. But if you could... I'm gonna take this bit of land and do something... I've always thought that I've wanted to do that kind of thing... And it's like no opportunities... but I've noticed a few of those things round here but it's like it shows that the desire is there but maybe not the commitment to like actually just be like,

oh, we'll take this land. Because it feels like it's still very well done, but I always think, what it is called? Ninian Park, that's like a prime example of one where I feel like it's just grass...

Rabab

Do you mean over in Roath?

Owen

Oh wait is it..?

Rabab

Do you mean Ninian Park Road here or Ninian Park over in Roath? The actual park, Yeah.

Owen

I mean it's like by the train station at the end of Ninian Park Road.

Rabab

Oh, Leckwith... that corner. Yeah! Near Lidl.

Owen

Yeah, it's just like this big green space but I feel like it... because if you're allowed to plant stuff there I reckon it would be a very good space, do you get what I mean?

Rabab

You could grow food on that space.

Owen

Exactly, yeah, it would be really good and yeah, exactly in that food could go to people as well like there's people that would appreciate that. Yeah, I kind of think that's, the kind that's the kind of thing that, I think like dreamwise, what I would like things to be a bit more like.

Tess

Like public space actually being public space.

Owen

Yeah like I don't I don't feel it I don't feel like it's mine. I feel like... it's like the government's. Yeah, whatever that means.

David

So, Riverside 30 years from tomorrow, we don't have police, we've abolished them, we have community support. We are as a community, we look and hold each other, and we help each other. We have mental health support, crisis responders, for those that need it, we have, we already have a pantry that serves and provides food that's affordable. But that's right out there. That's, you know, it's part of... I've got some spare apples, you can have them and we live in a connected world within our community. There's trees lining every single street, bam, bam, bam, bam, all the way along. And these trees in themselves not only give a shade from perhaps the intolerable heat, but they also store the water that would otherwise go straight into the river, and potentially flood our neighbours in Grange... or add to the flooding implications for those in Grangetown. No... if I was truly dreaming, I'd say no person was in great need, we'll always have... we'll always have times of crisis, we all have various things and elements of our lives that make them difficult to limit, some much more than others. You know, from the time you're born, that's when deprivation starts. But we nourish every person in our community, a community that's thriving, like we live in a beautiful multicultural community and so much to learn. I think we need spaces to do that as well. We need open community spaces. Opposite my house is an abandoned old pub that's been boarded up. And it did previously have a beautiful group of squatters living there who provided food for homeless people and they were kicked out and it's been abandoned ever since. Here we have community space. Doing nothing, but a space where people could come and break bread and share problems and share books and share ideas, share food, share money! And I guess come back to what we were doing at the beginning of the pandemic. Mutual Aid is about really helping lift us all up. And doing that by whatever means. And that means, you know, surpasses any political motive. Yeah, we could have food, we could have food growing on every street corner in the front of every house. We started this five years ago, but you know, each and every one, not every one of us, you know, I've got a bit of time, I've got the expertise. And at that time, you know, we were living on no money at all. But I thought Yeah, I can, I'll take three grand a year, and I'll go and put planters in people's front gardens. I'll just grow the food that we have to eat. And I wonder if we can do more of that for people that are working, you know, these slave wages. And you know, if they are then support them to Unionise and protect their rights because they have been eroded. People are working for nothing, and they're getting nothing. They get nothing but tiredness and a bit of money, and not the time and space to think and dream. So maybe the dream is that everyone in my community gets to dream. Maybe that's it.

Shanara

How would I like Riverside to change? Or is that what you said?

Stephen

Yeah, definitely. That's definitely one of our questions. Yeah,

Shanara

I think we definitely need to strengthen ourselves from the base in case something like this should happen. We definitely need to understand that we cannot undermine the value of community. Because if something like this should happen again, it will hit some people a lot harder than others. But I think it has hit a lot of us hard and underlying sort of, unknown neuroses have come up on the surface. For a lot of people, like people say, "I didn't know I felt this." So I didn't know I could suffer from this. You know. Loneliness is a pandemic in itself. Oh, hello. Am I still on? Sorry. Loneliness is a pandemic in itself and perhaps it's the greatest pandemic. And that is something we do a great job of tackling that with clubs like gentle/radical. But we need to really strengthen ourselves, you know, from the underbelly. So we can face these challenges. But there's like, apart from the obvious pandemic, there's the micro pandemic, that we kind of experienced in our everyday lives, you know, where we feel, we just have to get on with things alone. And I hope there's a little bit less loneliness when the lockdown lifts.

Stephen

Yeah. I mean, I don't know what the answer to this question is. And I don't think it's an easy question. But, how do we do that strengthening of community? Do you have any ideas about that? I'm just asking that question, because I feel like I don't know what the answer is. There isn't an easy answer.

Shanara

But fascinatingly, the course I have chosen seems to be so suitable for the current environment. It's actually a languages and identities course. And in the course, I've learned that every two weeks, a new language in this world is dying. And in the next two years, we could be reduced to about 50 languages. But when a language does die, it takes along with it the human experiences, you know, and history, and something, we call in English, the death of nuance. So, different languages bring with them something called different repertoires, and repertoires are different, completely different ways of finding expression in ways that you didn't even know you could, because the whole new language opens up to that expression, or a repertoire doesn't have to be verbal, it could be emotional. We definitely need to open our eyes up to that. And there's this huge fallacy that just speaking English or spreading English around the world would make it a far more intelligent and sophisticated world, you know, we need to be able to communicate with people in their own unique peculiar repertoires, you know, and pick up nuance, don't let nuance get lost, nuance in all different ways. Like let's celebrate the introvert. Let's celebrate every different type of personality, and let's realise we all have a stake in this together. You know, it's not just for the one or the other, you know?

.....

We hope you enjoyed hearing from some of the voices in our community. Doorstep Revolution is an ongoing project. So if you're a Riverside resident and want to get involved, do get in touch with us at gentleradical.org. In the coming months and years, we'll be continuing to build a resource of stories,

perspectives, and dialogues, exploring the realities, as well as the dreams of people living on our doorstep.