



# Exploring Black-led Community Knowledge

**ROOTED**  
BY DESIGN

# Grounding

Welcome to who you are now in this present moment, who you were yesterday and who you are to become. This work invites us to embody and feel rather than just consume.

In honour of this, we would like to encourage you to close your eyes and take 5 deep breaths to embark on this knowledge sharing journey with us.

Reflect on what is changed in you as you flow through this...

[Click to listen to a grounding poem](#)



# Treating what you read with care

The insights, ideas and learnings contained in this report have come from the personal experiences, challenges and thoughts of staff who are disproportionately experiencing the impact of financial challenges, as part of their daily lives.

For anyone using, sharing or referencing the content within this report, please do so with care and respect, recognising the challenge of financial well-being still very much exists, and is likely to intensify.

To reduce the risk of extraction from these experiences and learnings, please do not take content, quotes, or insights out of context, and if in doubt about the meaning or understanding of this work, please contact **hello@rootedbydesign** - with the subject header, Community Knowledge.

# Dedications

We would like to value the contributors to this work; thank you for sharing your time, knowledge and expertise.

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# Context

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Why are we doing  
this work?

# Context

Research and design have always existed in Black communities even before these fields were intellectualised in Western academic spaces. Black communities, have typically used experiential, spiritual and communal ways to make sense of the world, to invent, imagine and create solutions that respond uniquely to the challenges of our communities and the world.

As the field of research has evolved and become more institutionalized, limited space has been given to alternative ways of surfacing and creating knowledge and insight - and in many cases been a harmful tool to Black communities. As a result much of what exists in society has not benefited from the depth of wisdom that still resides within Black communities, especially around the challenges that are closest to our communities. As the challenges in society intensify, never has there been more urgency to nourish and discover new community knowledge practices and systems, to inform future agendas, ideas and change for community, by community.

This work advocates for Black-led practices to be centred in creating futures where we experience abundance.

In our practice, we are challenging and changing the language we use to describe this work, in order to better reflect its intention. Throughout this document, we will refer to the following:

**Black-led practices;** mindsets, methods and tools that derive from or appreciate the customs, traditions from Black communities and histories.

**Knowledge/ Community Knowledge;** the stories, embodied experiences and truths that are passed on and bond communities.

**Community Knowledge Creation;** the ways in which community learn and create shared understanding of themselves and their environment.

# Why are Black-led practices of research needed?

**There is a need to reimagine how research is led by Black communities, using practices that stem from their traditions, cultures and experiences. Only then will we see a new emergence of ideas, thinking and progress that communities and systems need. We however need to clearly understand why alternative and more ingenious practices are need.**

## **History of exploitation**

Foundations are large commissioners of research in communities, however research has historically of being harmful to Black communities. There is also a recognition that large amounts of wealth held in foundations stem from slavery and exploitation of Black bodies. There is a need for these organisations to see the role of research as reparative.

## **People are already doing this**

Research in communities is typically based on understanding a need and therefore creates a power dynamic between researcher and the “researched”. In order to move out of a cycle of need, we need to redress power and recognise strength. People in communities and in academic spaces are thinking about and practicing new ways of working with their communities - what can be learned from the ways that they are doing this?

## **There are Black people in the future**

The future and past are always imagined in singular ways that centre Whiteness and have displaced Black communities from narratives. Black communities today are the most diverse and most complex they have ever been. It is in this context that Black-led practices are vital in surfacing and preserving the nuances these experiences, talents and voices will contribute to new futures. The richness of Black-led practice invites us to grasp these narratives and expand possibilities to make more equitable futures real.

Our mission through this work:

**To platform Black-led practices  
of knowledge creation, its value  
and the future of this practice**



# Approach

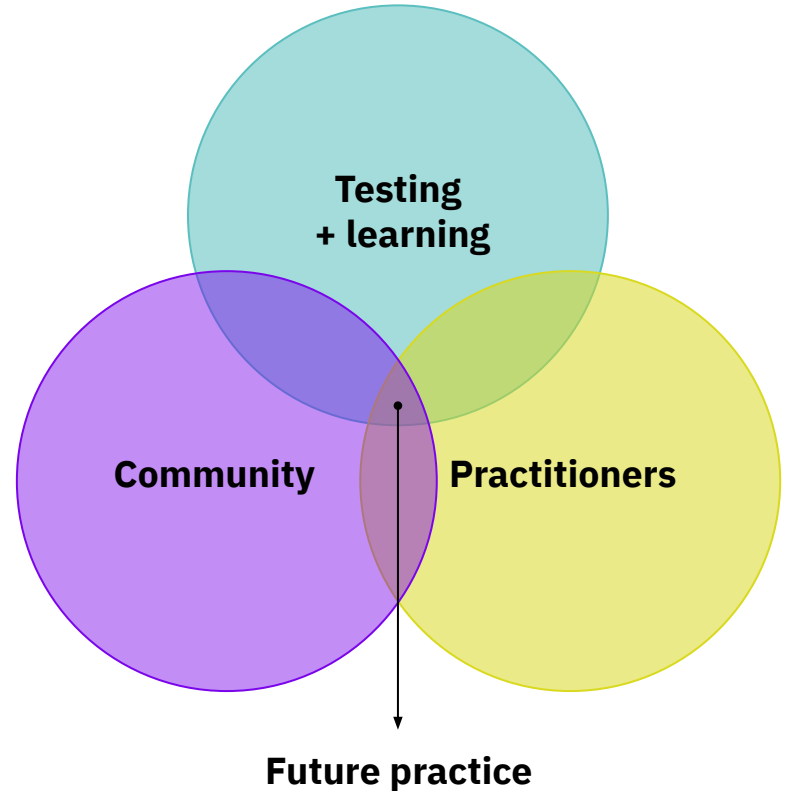
How we worked  
on this

# Our Approach

We approached this project in three ways:

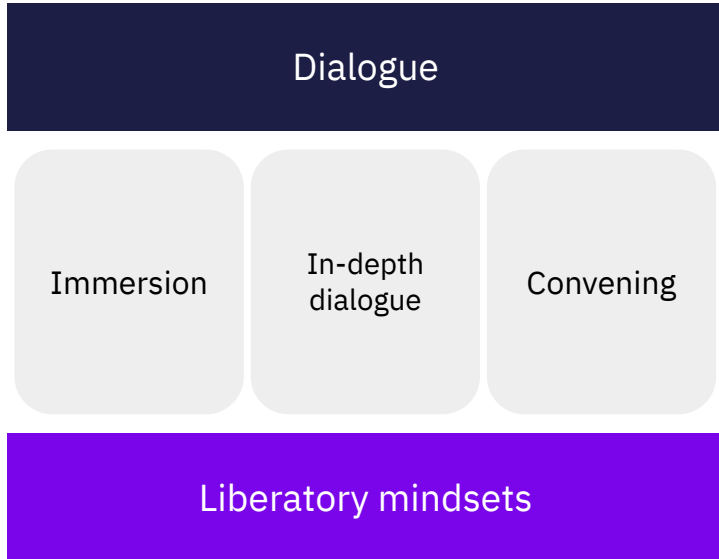
1. Understanding how organic forms of research/knowledge creation are happening in communities; what we can learn about the ways they engage; and what can be built on
2. Honouring practitioners who are creating intentional spaces for research/knowledge creation in ways that disrupt the status quo
3. We embodied different ways of practicing research/knowledge creation throughout this project

We looked across these spaces as a way to imagine what the future of the practice could look like, and what needs to be invested in, in order to get us there.



# Our Approach

## Activities & Mindsets



### Dialogue

The core of this project is about how we understand people through dialogue; it is an exploration of how we dialogue well and what conditions are needed for good dialogue to happen. We experimented with a number of ways to dialogue, including:

- **Immersion:** Spending time in Lambeth & Southwark experiencing it with all our senses. Walking the streets, speaking to locals and being led by the energy of the people and place.
- **In-depth dialogue:** Individual conversations with people to understand their personal stories, journeys and truths.
- **Convening:** An exploration of group dialogue in an in-person and online forum. Using mindsets and tools to shape different types of dialogue.

### Liberatory mindsets

In order to hold ourselves accountable to working in equitable, fair and different ways on this project, we committed to a number of Liberatory mindsets from the Liberatory Design collective:

- Seek Liberatory Collaboration
- Work to Transform Power
- Exercise Creative Courage
- Embrace complexity and actively call out our fear and discomfort

## Our Approach

# Tapping Into Our Knowing

We began this work with a set of hypotheses about the problems associated with research in communities. These were a starting guide for our discussions which led to wider discoveries about what it means to engage communities on their terms.

**Language** around research is academic and inaccessible so people don't see the value or see themselves in it

The **spaces** that communities create knowledge in are not valued, known or understood

The **power of research** has not been communicated to communities, so they are unaware of it's value

**Ownership** of research is a vital part of how communities perceive and take part in it, however it has historically been held outside of the communities

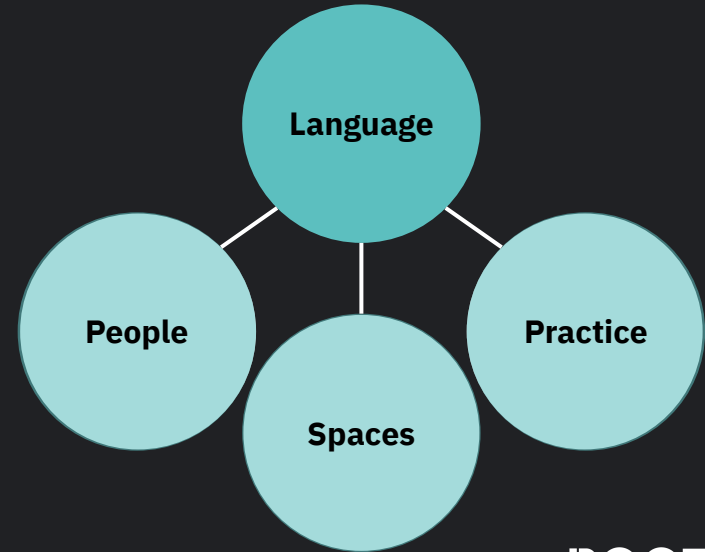
# Document Overview

We explored Black-led Community Knowledge and how it expresses itself, through:

- Language
- People
- Spaces
- Practice

Through this work we've found that language is the starting point; how we define this work determines how it is practiced, where it happens and who is doing it. The next section describe these elements in more detail.

## Black-led Community Knowledge practice



A woman with dark hair styled in a bun, wearing a dark blazer, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is holding a white envelope or document. In front of her is a clear plastic cup with water and a blue and white striped straw. The background shows a window with a view of a brick building. The scene is lit with warm, natural light, creating a soft shadow of her profile on the wall behind her.

# The Language of the Intangible

This section explores the value and role of language in Black-led Community Knowledge

***“Research is violent for  
a lot of communities”***

**Aleema Gray**

Curator, Public Historian, PhD Researcher

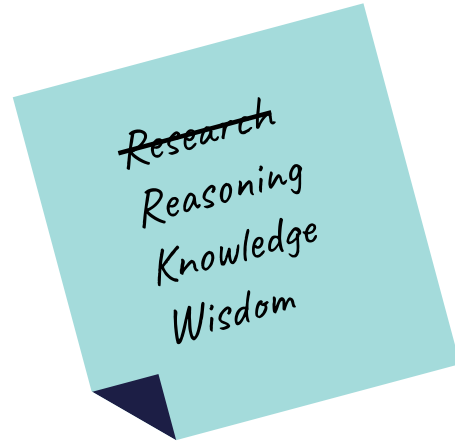
# The Language of the Intangible

## Language unlocks potential

The language of research dictates who is locked in and out of research. Words matter, people's reactions and experiences of 'research' have been extractive and harmful, so their participation in it is sometimes conditional on whether they trust who is leading it. People also associate research with institutions and 'experts', who aren't reflective of their human experience.

With this in mind one of our starting points was exploring how we can use language to increase people's participation and engagement but also how it can include what is often missed or misunderstood by traditional research practices.

Throughout the engagement period we used different words to replace 'research'.



## The Language of the Intangible

# The Knowledge in our communities

There are limitations to what can be surfaced through research. Knowledge, although broad, invites us to see the diversity and connection of the community and the spaces they convene in.

What we found is that framing research as ‘knowledge’ meant:

### **People can see themselves in the research**

Knowledge broadens the opportunity for people to contribute in it because it’s more culturally accessible. It allows for different types of contributions that speak to people’s personal identities, traditional ways of being and lived experience meaning insights have a higher chance of being true to communities and bring new change.

### **Unlocks new spaces for care + solidarity**

Using knowledge also helped us recognise the untapped spaces where knowledge is being created and shared, and the potential for these spaces to connect, support and mobilise ideas if they are nourished.

### **Acknowledgement of existing practices**

Reframing the language recognised that people are already doing the work of researchers, they’re just not calling it ‘research’. The language of knowledge invites different ways of knowing that affirm people’s identities.

## The Language of the Intangible

# How is Knowledge expressed?

Throughout this work we have witnessed patterns as to what knowledge is and what other aspects it opens up in people in more detail. These are the early foundations of what knowledge allows us to witness in community and adds a new dimensions to this practice and how communities choose to express this on their terms.

### **Knowledge is self**

*“Knowledge of self is also making them think differently about how they can use their knowledge for good”*

### **Knowledge is remembering and dialogue**

*“Remembering things in dialogue brings another dimension to the idea of knowledge...Talking to grandparents we were always talking about new things, renaming people, reteratorialising places, reliving memories”*

### **Knowledge is intangible**

There’s an intangibility to the way people experience and practice knowledge. People speak of this in terms of spirituality, embodiment and energy, which are things that can not be easily codified or evidenced.

*“Spirituality, energy fields, duppy!”*

### **Ancestral knowledge**

Ancestral knowledge appreciates the intangible, the spiritual. *“It’s an African thing, it’s word of mouth, it’s storytelling. It’s in our music, it’s in our fashion, it’s in our words”*

# Questions to explore further

- **What are the nuances in language between different Black communities?**
- **How is new language introduced and adopted?**
- **How can language be a form of repair to communities who feel locked out of mainstream discourse?**
- **What role does language play in creating a hierarchy of knowledge?**



# The Community Knowledge Experts

This section explores the roles that exist in communities who are supporting and contributing to Black-led Knowledge Creation

***“If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”***

**Lilla Watson**

Visual artist, activist and academic working in the field of Women's issues and Aboriginal epistemology

The Community Knowledge Experts

# Knowledge Creation is relational work that is built on mutual trust

In order to do deep work with and within communities, we know that it needs to be led by the people from that community. Black communities want to see people from their area, who look like them doing the work of “researchers”. This is largely about trust; trust that their experiences will be understood, held carefully and trust that something will be actioned that is in their best interest.

Knowledge creation is relational work meaning it is fed by deep trusting relationships. Unlike research, this requires a level of subjectivity; people working with and in communities need to have a stake in the communities’ progress. It’s important communities are supported to do this work in order to build the relationships necessary to do it well.

***“[I] want to see people from ends speaking on our behalf”***

***“I have to be a Dad, Brother, a man and I have to be well organised for an institute to invest. You are asking and trying to invest in who I am, which is priceless”***

# The Community Knowledge Experts

## People are already doing the work of 'Researchers'

Reframing the language from 'research' to 'knowledge' recognised that people are already doing this work, they're just not calling it 'research'. They also don't always realise the value it can bring to them and their community.

Those who are creating and sharing valuable knowledge can sometimes be those who are locked out of traditional research. Knowledge is being created and shared in gangs and on street corners between displaced people. However, people in these spaces are often not aware of how the knowledge they are creating can be channelled into change.

***“There are hundreds of researchers in our communities, they just don't call themselves it”***

***“Even though them man are gangsters, they are still part of the community”***

## The Community Knowledge Experts

# Community Knowledge Archetypes

There are a number of roles people in communities have adopted around knowledge creation, which reframes what it means to be a 'researcher'.

### KNOWLEDGE SHARERS / TRANSLATOR

These are people who are knowledgeable about the area and up to date on what is happening. They are aware of key groups and are organically creating and sharing information within community. Sometimes their role is to take existing knowledge from official bodies (e.g. local council) and translate it in ways that communities can make sense of.

Matt attends local meetings and is part of an activist group; he takes what he learns from these spaces and updates the community on the plans that are being decided.

***“It’s kinda like whistle blowing and bringing about information that most of us don’t get to see”***

### KNOWLEDGE CONNECTORS

These individuals are great with people and thrive on spotting potential and making connections. They are well-networked and connected within the community and actively make links between people and projects.

Mitch knows lots of people that hold skills and talents that he’s planning to turn into a directory. His past roles have involved taken skills and fusing it with local knowledge.

***“It’s like having a big directory! Our community has so much talent it’s just not being discovered.”***

## The Community Knowledge Experts

# Community Knowledge Archetypes

There are a number of roles people in communities have adopted around knowledge creation, which reframes what it means to be a ‘researcher’.

### KNOWLEDGE FACILITATOR

These individuals are motivated by building capability in community, so are providing spaces for dialogue and knowledge creation to happen. They facilitate this by using their business space in ways that serve a social function for the community.

Anita uses her gift store in Brixton to curate workshops and events that aim to empower people, give access to new skills and build intelligence.

***“If you want to change to happen you need to lead the change”***

### KNOWLEDGE PRACTITIONER

These are people who are experimenting with different ways to engage and empower their community. They are contributing to the practice of community knowledge but are may not be actively aware of it.

Jason has a passion for community, is involved in putting on community events and has abundant ideas about how to better engage communities in their local area.

***“How can the market and community share knowledge through play? How do we heal through play?”***

## The Community Knowledge Experts

# How can we nourish these roles?

### **Space to take risks**

People need the time and space to experiment with their creative ideas, prototype and test over time. They need the ability to take risks, get things wrong, learn and try again.

### **Financial needs met**

People are often doing this work out of a civic duty but will have basic needs that need to be met in order to be able to continue working in this way. This can be as simple as having enough money to buy lunch, and can be more complex as meeting their business needs.

### **Connection with others in this space**

People are sometimes doing their work in isolation which can be exhausting. There is benefit in forming connections between individuals working in this space, to share learnings, opportunities as well as catharsis.

### **Support to move from dialogue to disruption**

Pathways to get things actioned, move things forward, link to policy / Training to get tools and skills to design  
A lot of the work is staying in community. People don't have pathways to channel their

### **Confidence and recognition**

People with strong potential for growing community knowledge don't always recognise their value or feel able to make change in their area. There is a need for encouragement and honouring of these individuals. Additionally, there is more to be done to recognise the value and recompense people.

# Questions to explore further

- **Where do these roles add value in the change that needs to be created?**
- **What conditions are needed to work in a relational way?**
- **Whose responsibility is it to hold the space for connecting community knowledge roles?**
- **What are the barriers to people adopting and continuing to adopt these roles?**



# Spaces for Dialogue

This section explores the spaces where intergenerational and interdisciplinary dialogue is happening and can be supported in communities

Good dialogue is central to how knowledge is created. For Black communities, knowledge is often passed on through oral histories as a form of remembering; in this instance the act of dialogue is knowledge. This is happening in the everyday; in homes, barber shops and on park benches.

We believe that spaces where people convene are ripe for this dialogue. Intentional spaces set up for dialogue and organic spaces invite different types of people and as a result, different knowledge. Organic spaces are untapped despite their potential to understand communities and prototype new practice.

*“Remembering things in dialogue brings another dimension to the idea of knowledge... dialogue is knowledge”*

**Akil**  
Resolve Collective

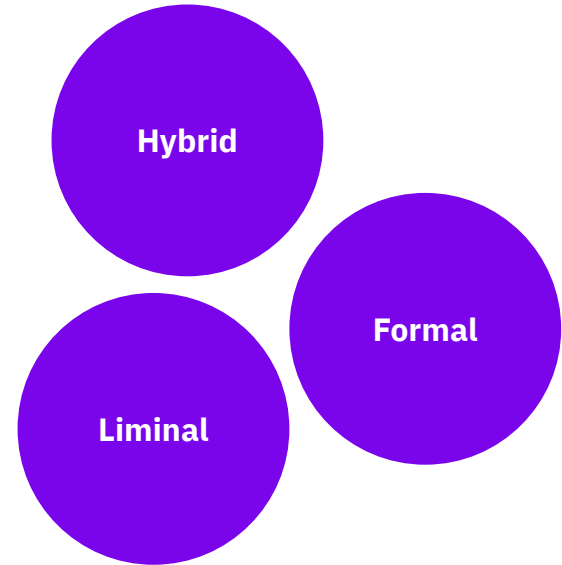
Spaces for Dialogue

# Spaces for dialogue and Community Knowledge

We began this project with the hypotheses that the spaces that communities create knowledge in are not known, valued or understood.

Through this work, we've experienced different types of spaces that foster different types of knowledge:

- Hybrid spaces
- Formal spaces
- Liminal spaces



## Spaces for Dialogue

# Hybrid spaces are providing new platforms for strengthening community knowledge

Hybrid spaces are spaces with a high footfall, usually set up for commerce that have adopted an additional function to serve the community. For example a gift shop that facilitates workshops out of hours.

We've observed that these spaces are set up by individuals with a personal ethos around building capability and self-reliance in their community. They are concerned with strengthening communities rather than servicing a need.

### Ways they are serving communities:

- Running workshops to build skills
- Sharing their physical space with community members
- Promoting local talent

### Why do these places work well for dialogue and what's the relevance to Black communities?

- **Cultural relevance:** these businesses are owned and led by Black individuals who have lived in the area a long time. Their goods and services celebrates Black culture and creativity
- **Visibility:** they are visible and accessible on the high street or market, which means they have a range of visitors.
- **Business offer:** They have an attractive offer of goods and services (e.g. food, gifts) that gets people through the door. The growing support of Black businesses means people are more likely to visit.
- **Intentionality:** There is intention to inviting people who are typically excluded or on the margins, e.g. single mothers or young people.

## ZIONLY, Peckham

A homely feel enters you as you step into Zionly, a vegan restaurant with its twin book and arts store next door. Situated in the heart of Peckham Rye Lane Centre it's been a long-standing fixture of Peckham and has thrived with its time.

*The owner, Jahson says, “Community knowledge is something that must be seen sensed and tasted.”* Zionly is an embodiment of this as the smell of fresh chickpea curry swaths around as you flick through books and records by Black artists.

Placing community at its heart, owner Jahson has made it his goal that these two twin ventures are continuously giving back to community and creating platforms for young entrepreneurs to learn the skills of business. **“If you have a business idea you can have the space, but you got to pitch it to me.”** Encouraging skills from early youth is his passion, as we speak, he is organising his next summer camp.

The space itself is regularly used for exhibition by the community and on Sunday (his non-trading days) the space can be used for free for workshops and community initiatives. The restaurant is not only a space to eat but also an informal counselling space where people can share ideas and things that may be troubling them. The decor and design of space also acting as a conduit to bring about more learning.



## Spaces for Dialogue

# Liminal spaces are created due to erasure of formal spaces, but have become a rich bank of community knowledge for future activation

Liminal spaces are locations which are a transition between other locations, where dialogue can happen. For example, street corners, parks, local estates etc. Liminal spaces are not set up with the specific intention of dialogue but have organically adopted this function in the absence of formal spaces for dialogue.

The gatherings in these spaces stir up community knowledge across a range of areas—these are the places people hear about new developments in the area, where they share grievances, connect with peers.

### The value these spaces create for community:

- Opportunity for community organising and sharing of information
- Provide space for venting and reasoning
- Space for joy and celebrating culture

### Why do these places work well for dialogue and what's the relevance to Black communities?

- **Cultural and historical relevance:** these are often spaces that are long-standing and have historical tradition of hosting gatherings of people.
- **Visibility & accessibility:** These spaces are usually in open, busy spaces in the middle of the happenings. They are low barrier to entry; people aren't likely to go to a Council meeting but they'll go to the bench.
- **Open to all:** People are encouraged to stay in these spaces. It attracts those who are traditionally locked out of research/ knowledge creation, particular people who are working class.
- **Organic:** It doesn't belong to anyone so it is flexible to be shaped and scaled

## BUSH MAN KITCHEN, Brixton Station Road

When you arrive at Bush Man's you will be warmly welcomed with a "Blessed" as the elders give you a big smile. Situated under the historic Brixton Recreation Centre, the space is unassuming yet magnetic as queues of people snake out the small restaurant. Traditional reggae songs gracing the airways and creating a sumptuous summer atmosphere. Home.

You will catch regular elders talk about the latest happenings of the market and what the youth may need. They exchange stories of old friends and adventures. Big hugs are exchanged as they make the space between the market and the street their home. Countless amounts of people walk by and stop and say hello.

Simultaneously this extension of Bush Man's which is both the street and the restaurant is a place for organising as young activist gather to share and galvanise the street into action and togetherness and where Councillors update the people on latest Council affairs.

There is an authority and also natural gravity that makes this small shop stand out and people know it is there. The shop is embodied knowledge its embodied truth and in many ways is an extension of Bush Man their history and their traditions. It feels safe.



## Spaces for Dialogue

# Formal spaces provide a good foundation and context for new dialogue but needs to adapt more dynamic ways of facilitating this

Formal spaces are spaces which have specific intent to bond people through an interest or topic, which is strengthened through dialogue and community knowledge. For example, Churches, Libraries and Museums.

### **The value these spaces create for community:**

- Consistent gathering and deepening of relationships and dialogue
- Hold and deposit information in an accessible place
- They can offer subsidies and initiatives for learning

Formal spaces provide established ways of knowing and preserving community knowledge. However, there is a staticity to the ways in which these spaces are doing this.

Through this work, we tried to reimagine what formal spaces for community knowledge could look and feel like. We hosted two convenings (in-person and online) that tested dynamic ways to bring people together and foster community knowledge.

### **Convening learnings:**

- Need for intergenerational connection
- Physical and energetic spaces for thinking about the future
- Use of crafts, creativity and storytelling to facilitate dialogue

## CONVENING

A great gathering of minds took place across both physical and virtual spaces, to begin the conversation on the practice of community knowledge. Practitioners were invited who are working closely with Black communities through their work; and are studying and practicing research that draws on Black traditions and histories.

**Convening one** took place at the Africa Centre in Southwark bringing together eight practitioners spanning community organisers, archivists, architects and academics to share knowledge and ideas on practice. Grounding the session with traditional Zimbabwean music was Lionel with the Mbira - asking us to reflect how ancestral knowledge and stories can be passed on. In concert our rhythms aligned as the first part of the session began.

Bonding over food and breaking bread together was part of the design and nourishment of the day. The evening that followed involved rich discussion centred around three questions and painting.

**Convening two** was a virtual gathering that brought together international voices. Grounding the sessions with the memories of the physical convening and quotes from prominent figures from the Black community the door was opened into a scenic zone of thought and reflections.

Practitioners were asked to bring forth items that spoke to ancestral knowledge to them and a beautiful show-and-tell introduced each practitioner to their work but more intimately to their intent, history and activism. Generous space was given to let the dialogue run and seek its natural course as emergent connections were made. The session had two central questions as practitioners reflected on their roles and challenges and where they seek inspiration from.



[Click to watch to a short film that introduced the online convening](#)

# Questions to explore further

- **For those who run/lead hybrid spaces what is the incentive and is there an appetite to scale?**
- **Is there an appetite from those who have spaces that could become hybrid spaces for knowledge creation?**
- **How can we keep these spaces sustainable?**
- **How can we support more hybrid space to exist in ways that add value to their business?**



# The Practice of Black-led Knowledge Creation

This section explores the principles and conditions for how knowledge can be created and shared

Reframing the language of research also reframes what it means to practice it. Throughout this project, we have explored through deep listening, observation and exploration, what the practice of Black-led knowledge creation looks like. From this exploration, it is clear that there are conflicts between institutional practices of research and the ways in which Black communities generate knowledge.

Even for Black practitioners in this space, they are continually balancing the tensions of their own Black identities alongside working in 'Babylon'. The spaces and conditions in which this work is being done has an impact on its ability to disrupt the status quo.

***“We talk about abandoning the system but never about what is going to replace it”***

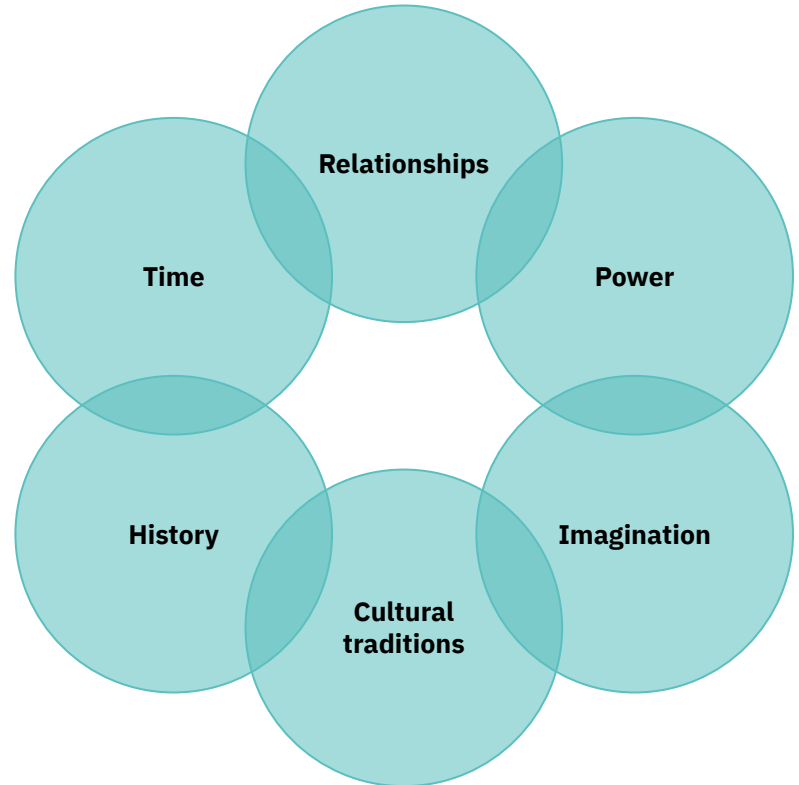
**Nick**  
Pem People

# The Practice of Black-led Knowledge Creation

## Reflections on the practice of this project

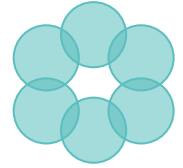
We have identified six key areas that begin to capture the **components of Black-led community knowledge practice**. The practice encompasses the people, spaces and methods used to connect with, understand and mobilise communities.

These will need further testing and exploration.



# The Practice of Black-led Knowledge Creation

## Reflections on the practice of this project



**Relationships** - this practice is relational and built on forming deep trusting connections. Relationships built on mutuality are key between Black communities; we share lived experience and have a vested interest in solving these issues, which adds a depth to the relationship that can be built.

**Time** - this work needs to be longitudinal to get to the depth and build the necessary relationships. It is important to generously give time to spaces and people who have historically been without.

**History** - to work with Black communities, trauma will likely surface. It is important to acknowledge what has come before, past relationships and traumas experienced by community. Time will need to be given to surface, release and repair some of these. ***“You can’t talk about Black people and their history without crying” - Brixton resident***

**Imagination** - this practice has a role in supporting an environment to move people out of reactionary and scarcity mindsets into mindsets of abundance and dreaming of what is possible. This is important to enable people to mobilise around problems.

**Rooted in cultural traditions** - this practice should honour cultural and historical practices and traditions. Knowledge is embodied and can be expressed through movement, music, theatre, craft, storytelling. It is not detached from the individual and therefore should affirm identities.

**Power sharing** - Our positionality to institutions meant that there were limitations to the level of trust and access we could build with some communities. This practice requires intentional structures to address power dynamics.

# The Practice of Black-led Knowledge Creation

## Principles

### **Regenerative / Generous**

We should seek to give more than we get in every interaction. There should be an awareness of the context in which this work is being done, which actively aims to repair, rebuild and regenerate by investing resources generously.

### **Liberatory**

We should unlock potential and build capability in people and communities that builds on their strengths rather than starting from a place of need. ***“Don’t want to be seen as being bailed out of the sinking ship of community” - Jahson***

### **Intergenerational**

Create connection between the future and the past by bringing people of different generations together. Create mutually respectful environments where shared ideas about the future can be surfaced with an appreciation for what has come before. ***“We’re standing on the shoulders of those that came before” - Nick***

### **Sure up da ting, invest in longevity**

We should invest in long-term goals of communities rather than reactionary responses to short-term need. Communities need commitment to relationships and resources over time. ***“Why do you wanna repair it once it’s broken, instead of suring it up when it’s leaning?” - Jahson***

### **Responsive**

We should be flexible and led by the intangible energy in our work with communities. We should listen with all senses and adapt based on what we are sensing in visible and invisible ways.

### **Trust**

We should invest in trusting and learning relationships when working with communities. Communities need risks to be taken on them that frees up space for them to experiment, get it wrong, learn, and try again.

# Questions to explore further

- **What are the conditions needed to practice a new way of surfacing insights?**
- **How can space be created for new practice to emerge?**



# A Glimpse Into The Future: Black-led Knowledge Creation & Systems

What could the future of Black-led  
Community Knowledge look like?

***“Our role as funders is to take the risks so that people can do the work that they have been doing for years”***

**Hakima Abbas**

Co-Founder of the Black Feminist Fund

# A Glimpse Into The Future People

## What would it look like if there were clear pathways for community members to contribute to knowledge creation and insight to support their local communities?

### The possibilities of the future:

- Community members given training and support to convene and facilitate dialogue and exchange through knowledge circles within community spaces. Pathways include:
  - A paid community service programme for young people
  - Nomination of community conveners through barber shops, local estates and churches
  - Self-nomination
- No qualifications needed apart from lived experience and commitment to see progress within an area of the community.
- The knowledge conveners are paid and are given 1-2-1 coaching to support them.
- Every year there are over 100 knowledge conveners from a diverse cross section of the community developing key insights into the needs, visions and dreams of the community.
- The insights are made available for the wider community to engage with, and systems stakeholders pay to use these insights.
- Every year, there is an annual convening and a celebration of people and a spotlight on what has emerged as priority themes.

### Value

- Increase in organic and community-led spaces dedicated to exploring the needs and dreams of communities
- Increased research investment going to people and communities.
- Increased use of existing skills and capabilities residents who would have never stepped in the field of 'research'
- Increase well-being in people who are not valued in their work.
- Improvement in employment opportunities

### Opportunities for funders to invest in this future:

- Creating a good mix of knowledge creation roles with those funders work with
- Maximising opportunities for community researchers to connect, meet and collaborate
- Establishing ways to recognise and affirm peoples research skills

# A Glimpse Into The Future Spaces

**What would it look like to create a ecosystem of knowledge spaces, which impact bigger systems and change?**

## **The possibilities for the future (Citizens Assemblies Reimagined):**

- Local spaces connecting with each other to create local knowledge networks.
- Insights are shared to find commonalities and differences and patterns in what has emerged from conversations - supporting a level of prioritisation of challenges and possibilities.
- The networks can support the framing of agendas and and can draw on the collective knowledge to respond to bigger policy challenges.
- Through the network ideas can also be generated.
- Host of these spaces will be paid for creating the space, but will work closely with the Knowledge conveners.

## **Value:**

- Deeper connections between knowledge network weavers/builders, stretching the fabric of communities.
- Increased joy as these spaces can easily become opportunities for connection and celebration.
- A joined up ecosystem will strengthen community voice and mobilisation
- The network can become a self-organising body, that can advocate and engage more strategically with bigger institutions.
- Naturally positioned to identify opportunities, ideas and people

## **Opportunities for funders to invest in this future:**

- To centre and respect these types of spaces, by giving intention to more funding going toward nourishing and enabling what happens within these spaces.
- To devolve funding to these spaces

# A Glimpse Into The Future

## Practice

### What would it look like for Black-led knowledge creation practices to be a thriving discipline in the research field?

#### Possibilities for the future:

- The development of knowledge creation institute focused on promoting and evolving and preserving the practice
- It would be an international and independent organisation with an offer of for courses and accreditation for practitioners across the world.
- The institute would convene international conversations that explores these practices in relation to the global majority
- Through the institute bigger questions about the research field will be challenged

#### Value

- A protected space for the practice and practitioners to emerge and evolve
- Shifting the practice from the margins to the mainstream, raising its profile
- A vehicle to convene bigger and more connected conversations between local, nation and international significance.
- A vehicle to celebrate and value the work of practitioners who do not fit the typical research mould.
- A central hub for the outputs, reports and insights that emerge from practitioners.

#### Opportunities for funders: to invest in this future:

- Allyship through covering the time needed to explore this possibility further
- Taking a harder stance on research practices which do not align



# Recommendations

What's next?

# Recommendations for the next phase

## 1. Test & validate

This exploration has highlighted key areas (people, spaces and practices) that if invested in could result in seeing more insights, ideas and change emerging from the community. We recommend developing small prototypes to validate and further understand how to operationalise the key areas.

## 2. Invest in the emerging ecosystem

It is clear that there is an emerging ecosystem of practitioners who are already taking and working with approaches that meet the communities where they are, and build on the existing assets within our communities. The desire from the practitioners for more convenings and intention protected spaces and mutual exchange, demonstrates the potential that exists for a more established ecosystem and an emergent discipline. We recommend finding ways to support this momentum organically.

## 3. Deep diving into more community assets

This work emphasises how important a community asset, as they have the potential to support the community take a lead on creating the knowledge with communities. Faith organisations and local estates, are examples of places that could easily become vehicles of community insights and voice. We recommend deep diving into these spaces, in order to surface the many opportunities we believe could be in these spaces.

## 4. Beyond research

Knowledge creation is an important part, it is not the part of the puzzle. Without the tools to respond to insights, imagine a new and test ideas, the communities won't be able to lead change on their terms. The local spaces explored could also provide in translation knowledge into actionable change. We recommend more exploration is done to better understand how knowledge is not only created, owned, accessed and acted on.

# Exploring Black-led Community Knowledge

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