



INCLUSIVE GROWTH
COMMISSION



RSA Fellowship

Shaping the inclusive
growth agenda



Introduction

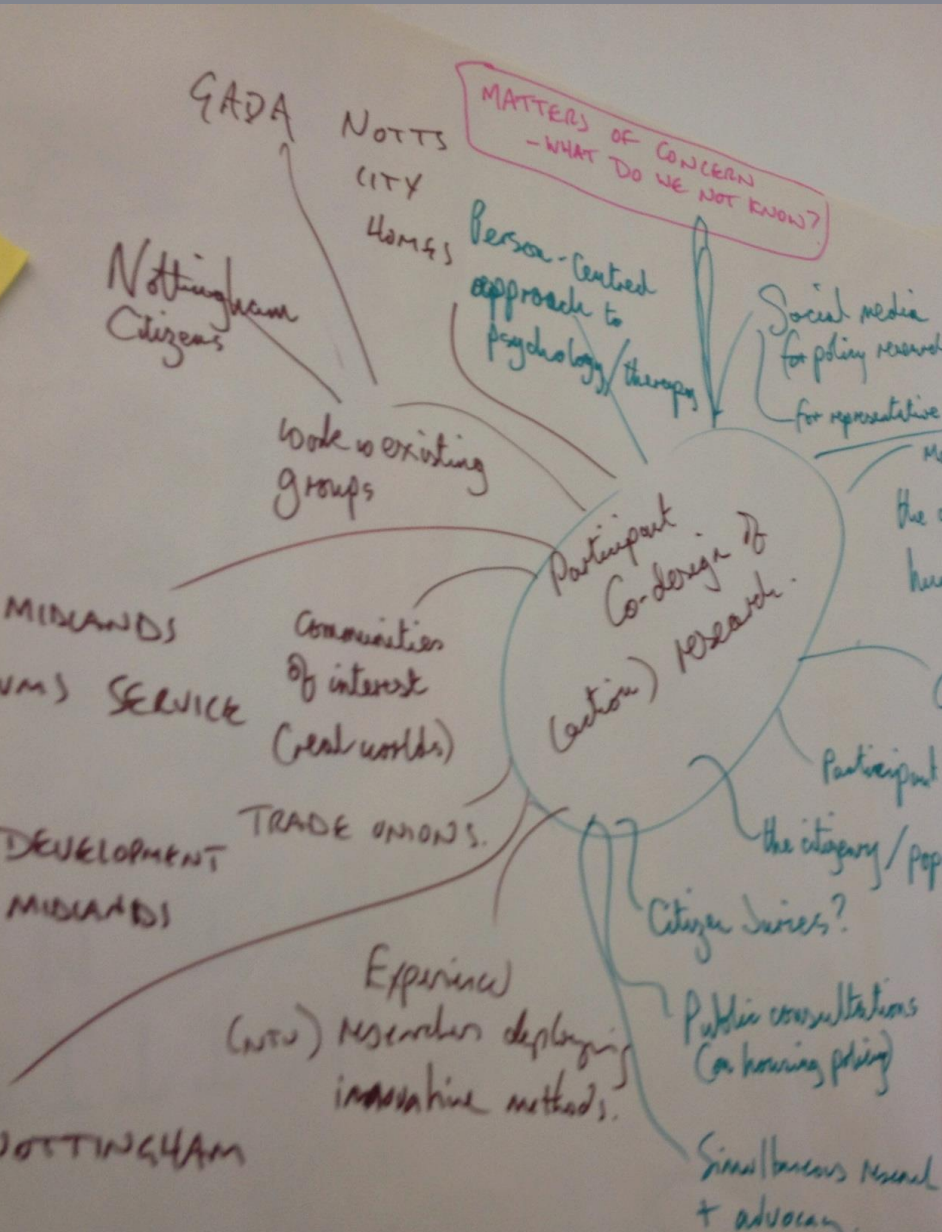
Over the past six months I've been criss-crossing the UK as part of the Inclusive Growth Commission, talking to RSA Fellows from Scotland to Yorkshire to the South West.

We've done this because RSA Fellows contribute a unique range of perspectives to our work; bringing together voices from the worlds of policy, education, business, technology, civic society and the arts. This diversity allows us to understand the central issue of inclusive growth from a whole range of different points of view. Some Fellows such as the councillors and politicians we spoke to are grappling with these issues as part of their leadership roles; others brought entirely new perspectives from those involved in voluntary work, arts and more.

We wanted to ensure that these range of voices could contribute their unique views to the Commission, helping us broaden and deepen our understanding of what inclusive growth should mean in the UK today.

The Fellows I've spoken to brought up a range of issues, but some themes came up time and time again. In this document we'll be looking at the issues around inclusive growth that mattered most to RSA Fellows and setting out how we plan to address them through the work of the Commission.

Joanna Massie RSA Project Engagement Manager



Inclusive growth and RSA Fellows

The RSA Fellowship is a unique network of over 28,000 people who share our values and support our mission of 21st century enlightenment.

RSA Fellows are integral to supporting our major projects such as the Inclusive Growth Commission; an independent, impactful inquiry designed to understand and identify practical ways to make the UK more economically inclusive, so that everyone gets to share in the benefits of growth.

Our aim was to access the perspective, experience and skills that RSA Fellows could offer on the subject of inclusive growth, ensuring the Commission could draw upon the broadest possible range of evidence.

To do this we ran a series of workshops with RSA Fellows around the UK to understand how these diverse perspectives could feed into the work of the Inclusive Growth Commission.

Seven key themes emerged from the Fellowship, which will go on to inform the work of the Commission over the course of its research.

1

Economic growth is just the start

There was a real sense that we were collectively struggling to define a vision of what a good society looks like, beyond the simple need for economic “growth”. Although greater and more equally-spread prosperity was an essential component, Fellows felt that we needed to go beyond economics and look at ways to reconnect with our fellow citizens in a more social, civic and ‘human’ way.

2

Challenges and opportunities

With the EU referendum having recently taken place, Fellows felt that amongst all the challenges the result will bring, there was also space opening up for a deep reappraisal of the kind of society we aim to become; a reappraisal in which the Commission is well placed to play a major role. There was a strong desire to ensure that the current policies designed to reduce the gaps between regions and citizens were not compromised as a result of Brexit; and that further, more radical policies were examined.

3

Bridging the gap

The Fellows who attended the Commission's events talked powerfully about an increasingly fragmented society with deep fault-lines between those who have been able to benefit from our current model of growth and those who had been left behind. These social 'fissures' were educational, geographic, historical, occupational and technological – and had a similarly wide range of causes. However the need to revitalise civil society and “reconnect” citizens in a more inclusive, participatory manner was something that many Fellows identified as the key to inclusive growth.

4

The central role of place

Fellows also spoke about the central role played by place, with the deep historical roots of communities such as former mining towns and post-industrial areas demanding a different and tailored approach to renewal, which pays respect to their heritage and builds upon the strength of these communities. Inclusive growth for these areas would mean a different approach to that taken for urban centres, focusing on their unique strengths, and how they integrate into the wider region.



Fostering inclusive growth in Scotland

While 'growth' is generally thought of as a good thing, how we go about achieving it in a sustainable and inclusive manner is hotly contested. Inclusive growth has been highlighted as a key aspect of Scottish Government policy and a consistent focus across economic activity.

In Scotland, RSA Fellows have created the Building Inclusive Growth in Scotland network to look at how best to contribute to an agenda which seeks to put more inclusive, human focused growth at the heart of Scottish economic policy. Acting as a new model for engagement between the RSA and its Fellows, the network looks to build upon the work of the Inclusive Growth Commission in order to maximise its impact within a Scottish context. This will involve events, networking with key stakeholders and contributing to the Commission's work to ensure it speaks with a Scottish voice.

With our communities facing many long term 'wicked' problems, RSA Fellows have highlighted the need to build social capacity – that is the ability of individuals and communities to take full advantage of the levers of economic growth that are available to them. It is also clear that a model of city-centric growth, although important, cannot be the whole story for Scotland. RSA Fellows have highlighted the need for Westminster, Holyrood and local decision makers to empower diverse, place-based innovation that is appropriate for the context it is being delivered in.

This Fellow-led activity, building upon the extensive connections and expertise that our Scottish Fellowship has, is a unique part of the RSA's offer and a strong addition to the work of the Inclusive Growth Commission.

Jamie Cooke, Head of RSA Scotland

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A bigger pie

All our contributors believed that devolution of power and responsibility had a major role to play in driving inclusive growth; however they also cautioned that towns, cities and regions would still require coordinated government support. What was needed was more radical thinking about ways to boost communities' growth, such as a community infrastructure levy, further liberalising of education and investment in community development to allow people to find the solution that works for them. Wherever possible the state should enable and empower, rather than centrally deliver.

6

Tailored localism

Fellows felt that the work of devolution needed to be strengthened; but there was no one-size-fits-all approach that would work for all – the current city-centric 'powerhouse' approach in the north of England is a major step forwards, however it isn't going to work for every community. Fellows expressed the view that even within such powerhouse areas there will be both social and geographic pockets which won't benefit without a major parallel social effort to reconnect, redistribute and re-energize.

7

Human infrastructure

Underlying many of the issues the Fellows identified were things that might be termed 'human infrastructure'. Education and skills were often mentioned as the key to more inclusive growth, as was the need to include topics like life-long learning, retraining and tapping into the skills of older workers. However beyond this, Fellows identified the need to foster and enhance the strengths and networks that can already be found in communities, investing in social and human capital as a vital way to ensure everyone can share in the benefits of growth.

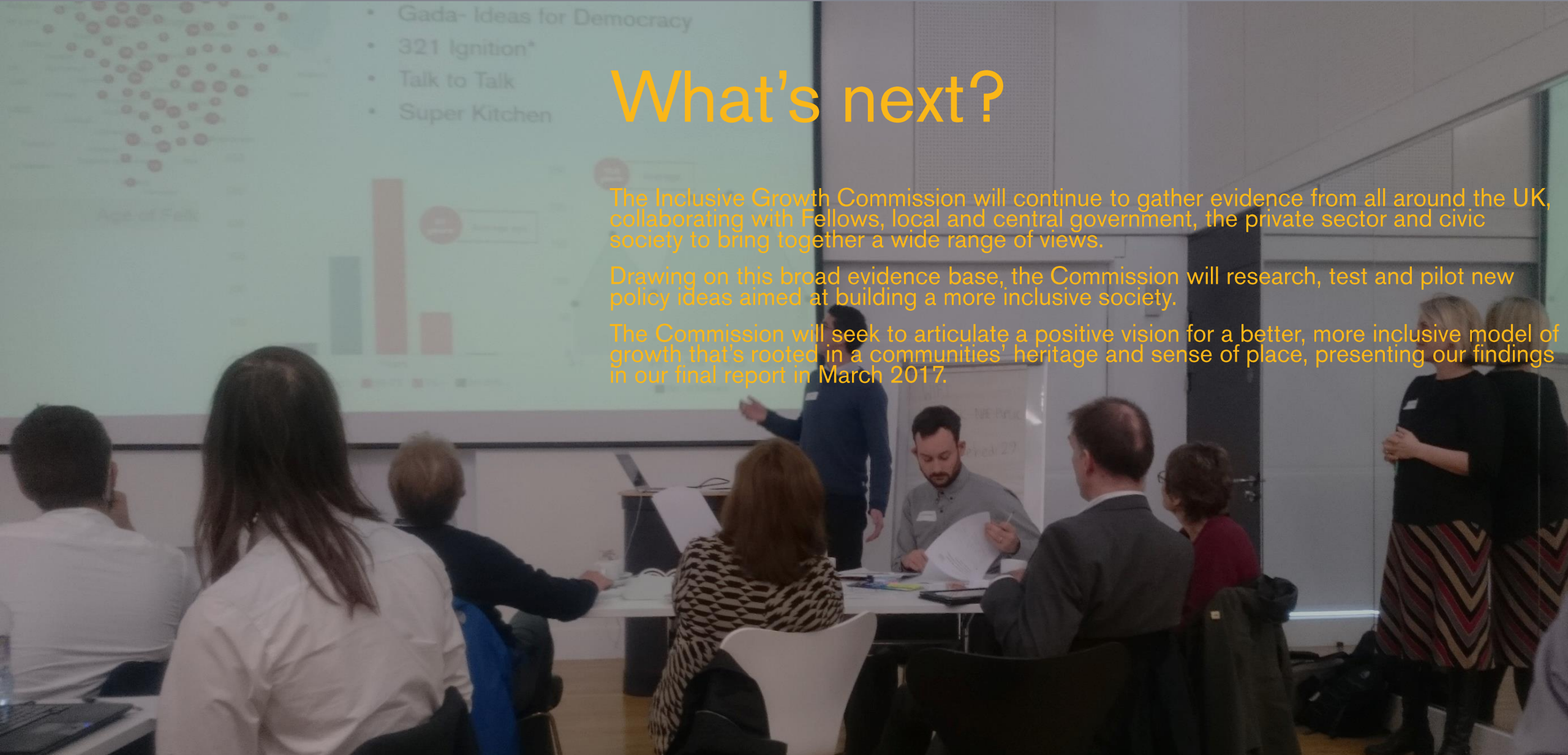
What's next?

- Gada- Ideas for Democracy
- 321 Ignition*
- Talk to Talk
- Super Kitchen

The Inclusive Growth Commission will continue to gather evidence from all around the UK, collaborating with Fellows, local and central government, the private sector and civic society to bring together a wide range of views.

Drawing on this broad evidence base, the Commission will research, test and pilot new policy ideas aimed at building a more inclusive society.

The Commission will seek to articulate a positive vision for a better, more inclusive model of growth that's rooted in a communities' heritage and sense of place, presenting our findings in our final report in March 2017.





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