Valuing our Life Support Systems Summit 2014

British Library
Conference Centre
7th November 2014

Storytelling Session Day 2

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Ecology of Knowledge

SURREY CONNECTS

SURREY wildlife TRUST

Natural Capital Initiative

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An introduction from the chair, Mark Pearson – CEO of Surrey Connects

By way of introduction, I am NMP, CEO of SC and Director of Business Growth with Surrey CC, the incoming Vice Chairman of the Institute of Economic Development, and a member of the Surrey Nature Partnership board, and chairman of Transport for Surrey.

The overarching common theme over the last 24 hours for me has been tacit over codified knowledge. I hope that this session will address that, and I am keen to learn how we engage and progress real business engagement, delivery and ownership of our Life Support Systems.....

Therefore I am delighted to Chair this session which will take form of a practical and interactive workshop on how we communicate Natural Capital.

For the last four years I have championed a SMART ECONOMIC GROWTH Agenda and Strategy in Surrey, progressing actions that support, enhance, facilitate, exploit and progress the understanding of HUMAN, SOCIAL, PHYSICAL AND NATURAL CAPITAL and the balance in and for Surrey,

I am leading on a growth narrative for Surrey, the most successful locality in terms of growth in the UK at 8% per annum. That narrative includes the wrap around activities of natural environment and understanding the value of the natural place thought the Valuing Surrey project, and importantly health, progressing work place health charter activities with the Surrey Public Health team, that are so important in delivering holistic economic development activity. I will describe the Valuing Surrey project in a moment...

I am pleased that Surrey Nature Partnership have been able to facilitate and support this session today, to help us all understand how we communicate Natural Capital and pleased that Ron Donaldson will facilitate this morning session.

As Jo Pike (World Forum for Natural Capital) said in her comments 'collaboration is the key to making progress, seeing collaboration as the way to make a difference'.

I hope you find the workshop useful, - Mark.

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A brief introduction to the Valuing Surrey Project

Our Partners

• National - Aldersgate Group, BioRegional, Natural England
• Local - Surrey County Council, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Surrey Connects

Project Aims

• to understand the value of natural capital asset in Surrey and how it should best be managed for long term sustainability,
• communicating this effectively to wide range of decision makers.
• USP – Localness and communication

Progress so far

• scoping work to develop project carried out
• gap analysis completed using funding secured (cash and in-kind),
• Phase 2 now underway – preparing a natural capital asset register for Surrey with particular focus on flooding and greenspace provision.

Key Facts from Initial Analysis

• Percentage of people with accessible greenspace within walking distance in Surrey is 23% (in UK 20%) so not that much higher despite most wooded county (15%) in England and 74% of county green belt.
• This suggests natural capital in Surrey is not well placed spatially to provide greenspace within walking distance – significant economic implications both for health care and workforce productivity
• Mental health – although overall incidence of mental health conditions is below the national average there are some areas where mental health needs are higher than national average, closely linked with areas of deprivation. Mental health needs are major factor in incapacity/employment support benefits claims – 26% in Surrey cf to 42.9% nationally.

Next steps

• to identify pilot area to carry out more detailed analysis and develop communication methods for key decision makers then to roll out to the entire county.
• Final step to use LNP network to roll out nationally.
• Will be used to inform Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Surrey (links Valuing Surrey, Biodiversity Offsetting and Future Skills projects)

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A brief introduction to Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI)

A story is a recounting of events based on emotional experience from a perspective.

We use stories to:

- build maps of the world we experience so we can make decisions about how to act
- make decisions about what to believe in, what we see and hear.
- transfer knowledge and information.
- playfully simulate possible outcomes before we commit to a course of action.
- condense experience into packages that re-expand in the minds of listeners.

Stories engage our attention, influence our beliefs or actions, and provide a “partial suspension of the rules of the real” that helps us safely explore the future.

A PNI project has 3 essential phases: collection, sensemaking and return (when stories are returned to the community).

People share stories in communities and organisations to negotiate a social contract, create shared meaning, meet challenges together, and play with possibility.

Participatory Narrative Inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making.

Insights derived from PNI need to be met with emotional engagement, so that people can find not just the reason but also the motivation to create change. People tell naturally occurring stories simply to share experiences; people tell purposeful stories to create an impact.

Extracted from new book by **Cynthia Kurtz:** 'Working with Story' who with Ron recently formed the PNI Institute https://pni2.org/

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A brief introduction to Knowledge Ecology

Taking an ecological perspective means focusing on the communities, the flow of knowledge and their relationship with the environment.

The sharing of knowledge in an organisation is much more an ecology that needs to be nurtured, than a precisely defined machine that can be managed.

Too much management, process improvement and standardisation reduces knowledge sharing, innovation and creativity.

A much more appropriate approach for the complexity of knowledge sharing and uncertainty of outcome in modern day organisations is proposed by Cynthia Kurtz (PNI) and by Dave Snowden of Cognitive Edge and is based around the use of narrative and natural sense-making..

By extending these principles, and focus, to the entire ecosystem you can generate **strategic beneficial impact** by way of an integrated approach to the management of:

- Knowledge
- Innovation
- Change
- Learning
- Leadership and Decision making
- Resilience, Agility and Adaptability
- and of course Sustainability

Ecology has at times been called the 'subversive science', since it subverts our egocentric insistence on separateness, and with it, our inclination to ride roughshod over the rest of the natural world.

By running a facilitated Knowledge Ecology workshops you will:

- create the starting conditions for new relationships and **collaboration**

- explore the narrative landscape

- remove constraints and disrupt linear thinking, to allow an anticipatory awareness of the present to emerge

- seed, trigger and encourage **creative thinking**

- amplify the positive and dampening the negative, by way of **feedback**.

- promote **storytelling** as a way to share knowledge and ideas

- embed beneficial learning and new ideas to add greater value to the **ecosystem.**

More info at http://rondon.wordpress.com/about/

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The Workshop

Following a storytelling masterclass which I ran for the Surrey Wildlife Trust back in the summer, Sarah Jane Chimbwandira CEnv Director of Biodiversity, Evidence & Policy asked me to collaborate on this session for the Natural Capital Initiative Summit.

We decided to trial run our session both to iron out any problems but also to test the method and outcomes of running the session with local business people who might take a more broader Socio Environmental Economic view.

So on 13th October in Guildford with Mark Pearson CEO of Surrey Connect we designed, planned and delivered this session.

The trial was a success and what follows are all the outputs from the British Library event on 7th November 2014

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Future Backwards

We used the Participatory method 'Future Backwards' which is a PNI/Cognitive Edge method that brings a group together to make sense of the present, past (both White) and possible future (Pink).

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Future Backwards

We split the room into six random groups/tables of six participants, and each constructed their own perspective on the story of 'Natural Capital'.

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The story emerges...

The groups were asked to create the timeline of their story in the order of:
- TODAY
- THE PAST (Backwards – to disrupt linear thinking)
- HEAVEN
- THE PATH TO HEAVEN

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Telling the story

Each group was then asked to nominate a 'storyteller' who would tell the story to other visiting groups, this time in a linear fashion.
There was time for two rounds of storytelling so each group experienced the making of their own story and heard two others.

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The Stories

What follows is the complete capture of all the story elements that were produced during our session, laid out as they were produced.

As you read through the outputs I would encourage you to look for:

- Similarities, differences and surprises between the tables
- Pay particular attention to the TODAY photos as that can give us an 'anticipatory awareness' of what is really on peoples minds.
- Finally look for weak signals, unusual ideas that might just show us a more creative way forward

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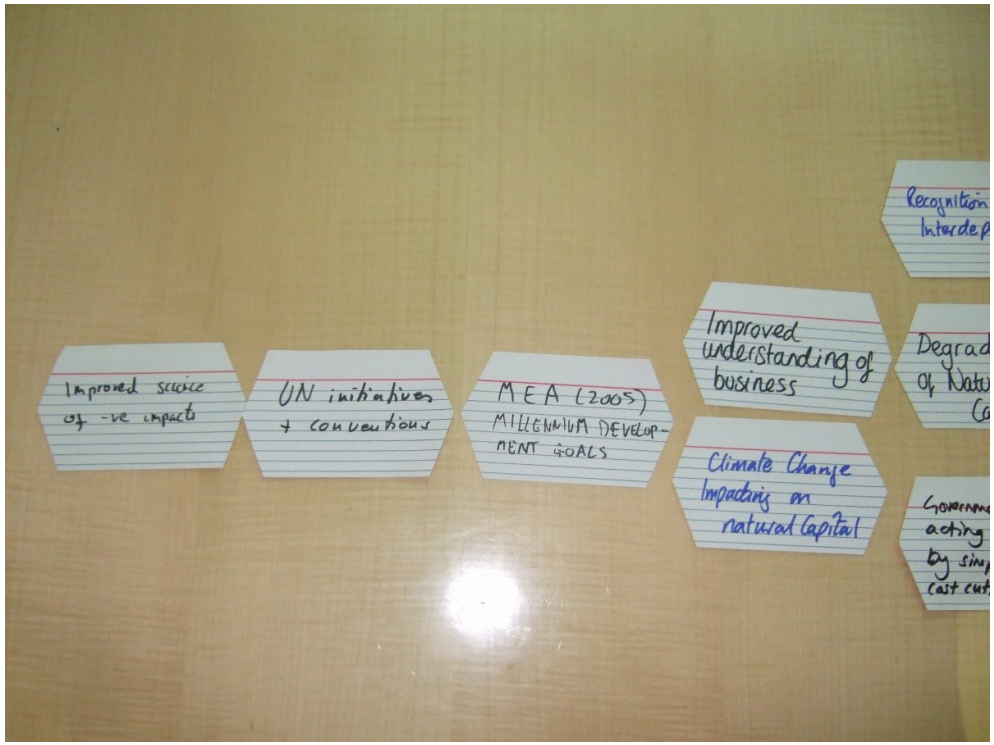
In the beginning, key events, turning points and decisions...

Table one



This part of the story is created backwards to avoid relating cause to effect ie we did this in order to create that. The past, in the complex world we live in, more often than not happens unpredictably and tends to only make sense in hindsight.
Each hexagon contains a few words summarising a key event, turning point or major decision and occasionally how people feel.

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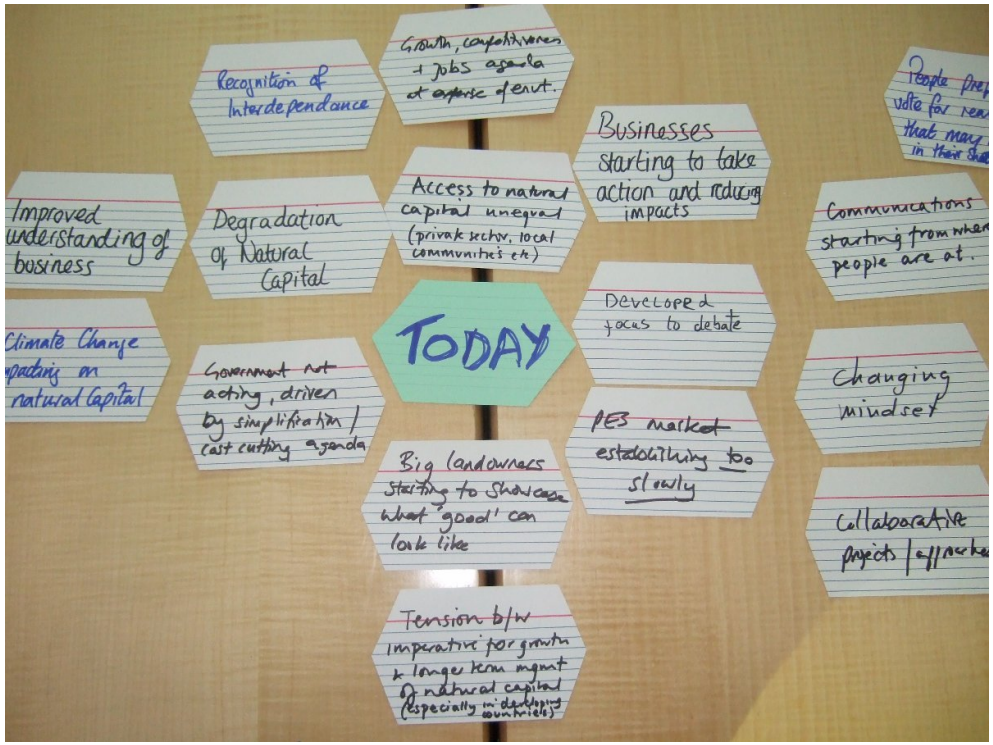
… led to the situation we find ourselves today...

Table one



In the method, this is the place to start capturing what we see and feel around the topic of the workshop. Everyone is encourage to participate if they want to, but it is also fine to watch, listen and learn.

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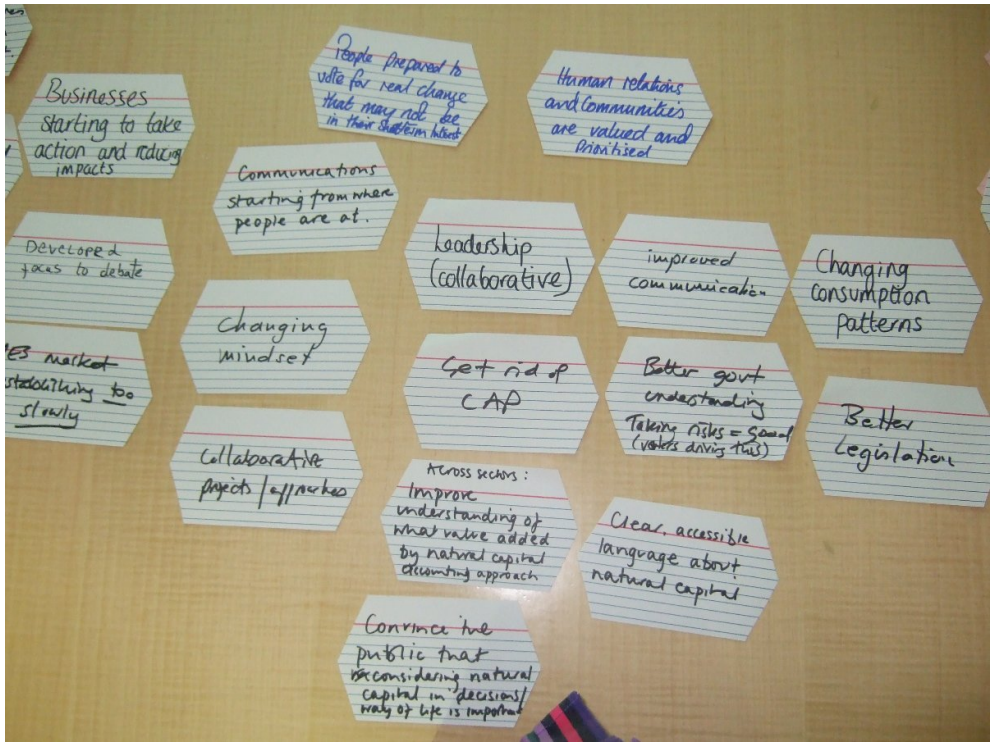
… and a possible stairway to …

Table one



What steps would you need to take in order to reach 'Heaven'?
It is especially important to identify what might be the very first step as this is traditionally the hardest to achieve. Achieve this first step, and you have momentum. You might however change your route but at least you are on the move.

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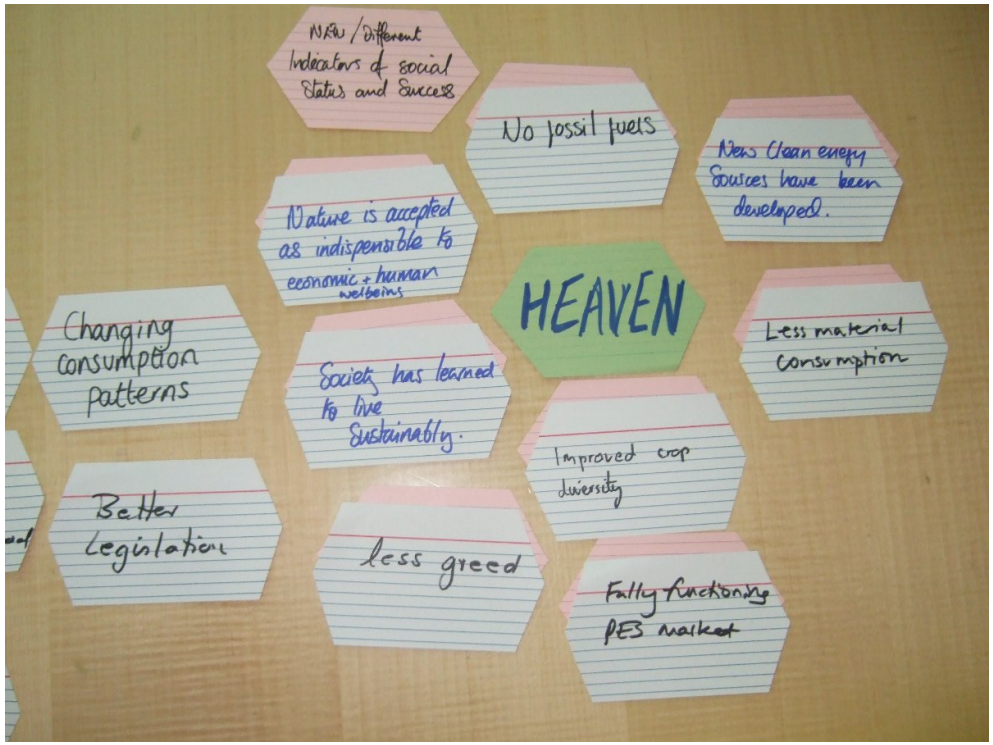
… Heaven might be:

Table one



Heaven represents the future in two years time “if everything that could go right, does go right'. No constraints, you have a magic wand, what could be achieved and how would you feel to be a part of it.
Optionally at this point you can also look at 'Hell' but experience tells me that it can have a very negative effect on the group and the outcome of the session.

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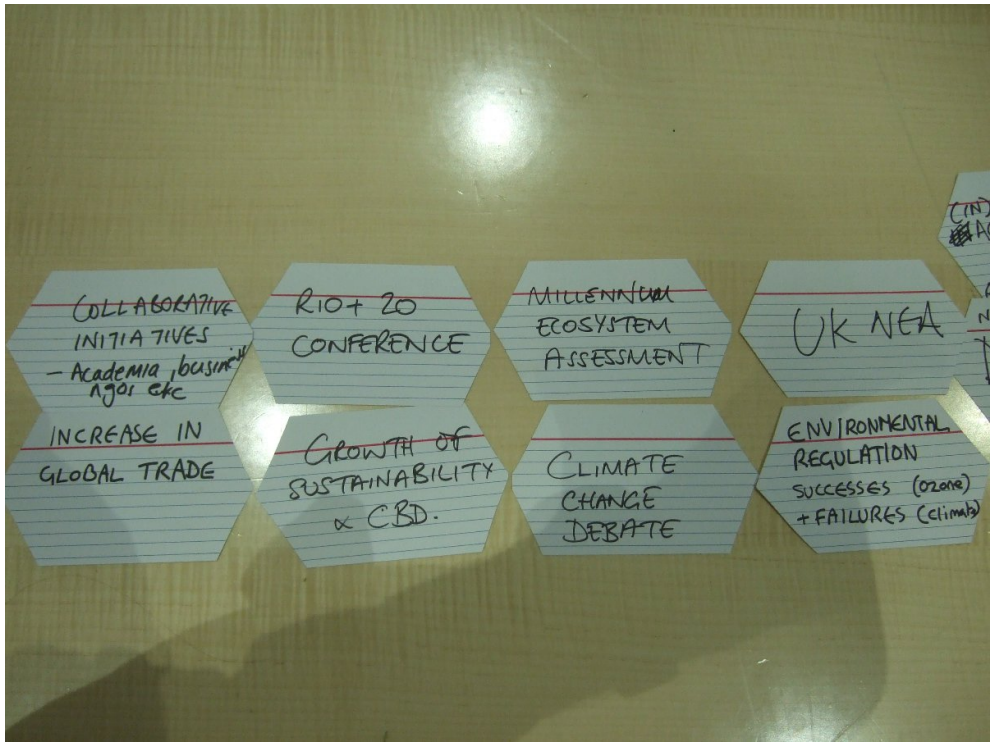
Once upon a time ...

Table two



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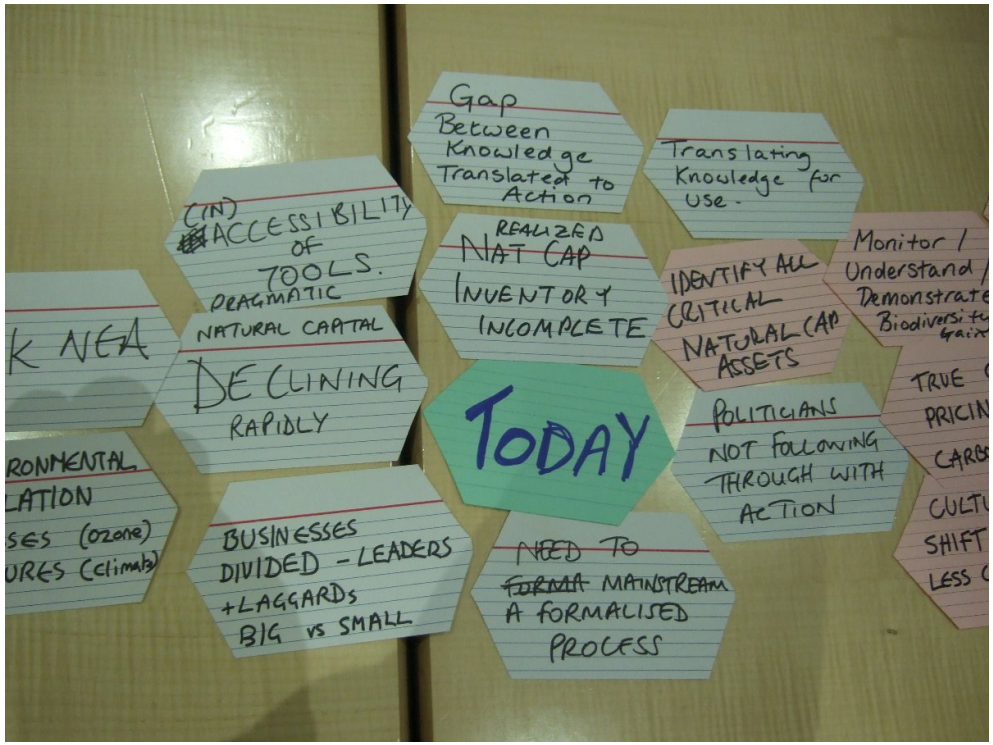
… leads us along the path to where we find ourselves TODAY...

Table two



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… and if we follow the stairway to HEAVEN.

Table two

And it's whispered that soon, if we all call the tune,
Then the piper will lead us to reason.
And a new day will dawn for those who stand long,
And the forests will echo with laughter.

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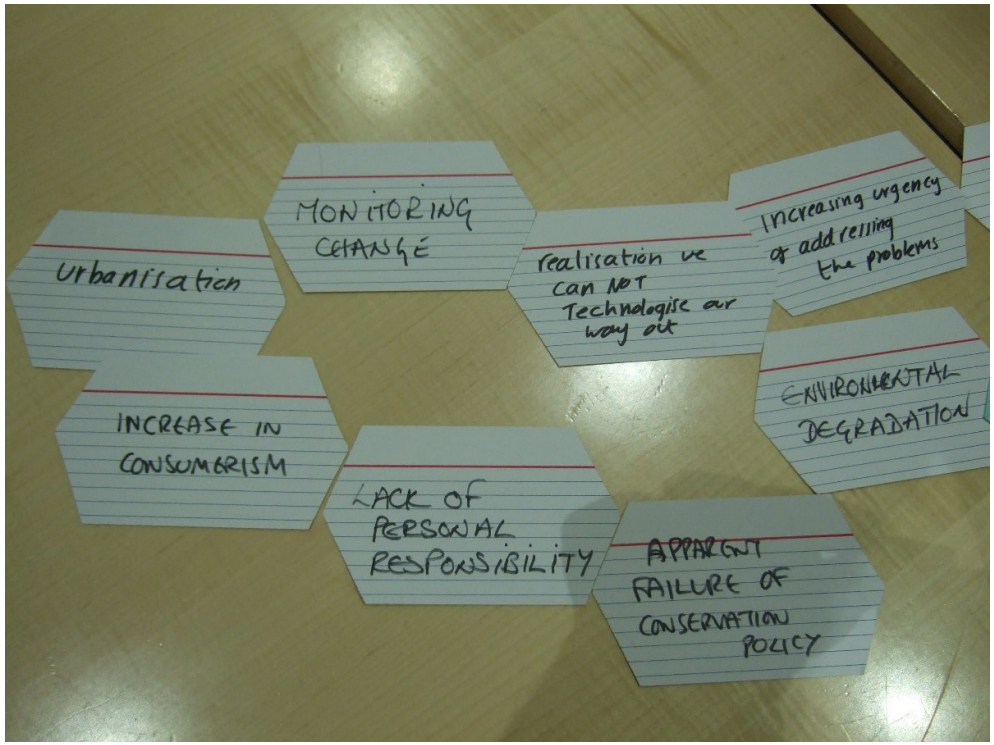
Once upon a time ...

Table three



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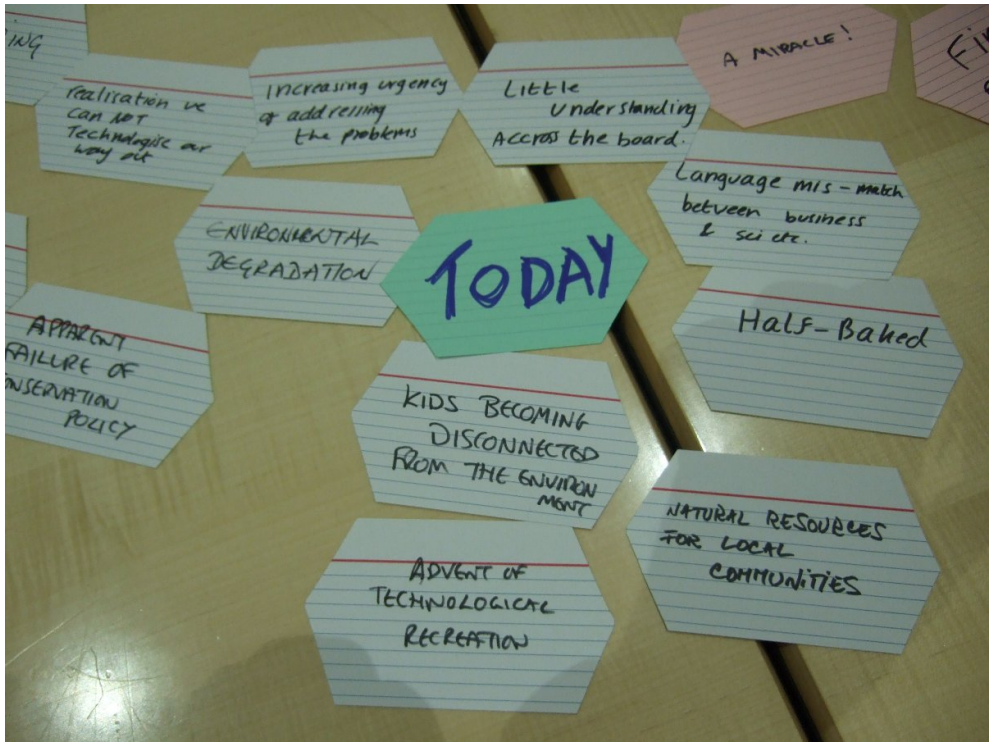

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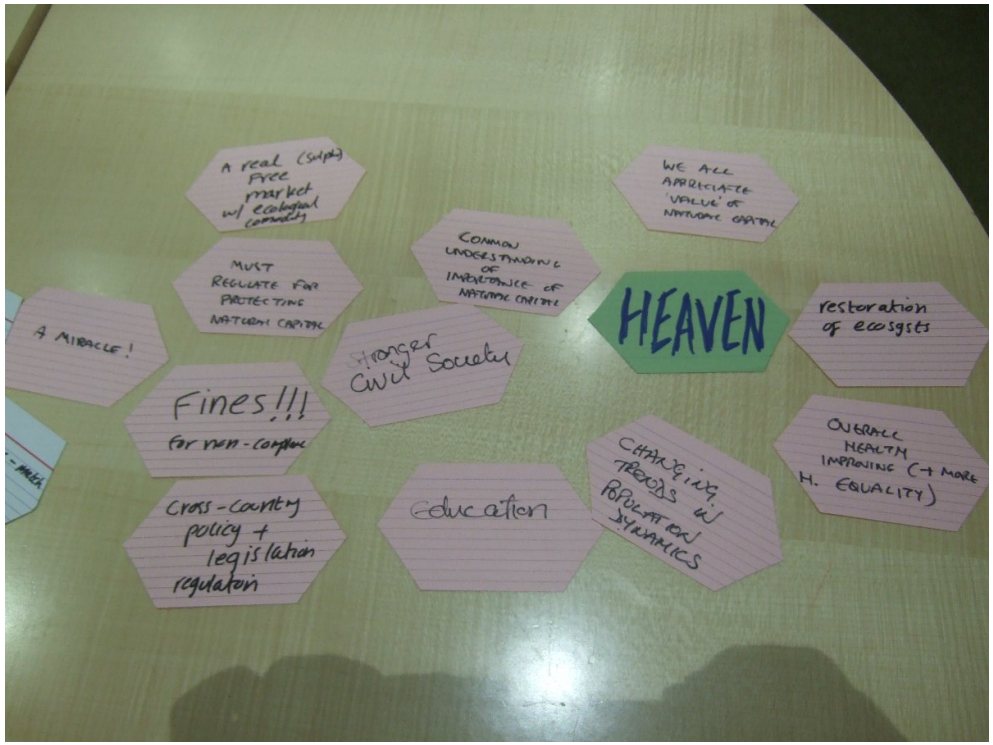

If there's a bustle in your hedgerow, don't be alarmed now,
It's just a spring clean for the May queen.
Yes, there are two paths you can go by, but in the long run
There's still time to change the road you're on.

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Once upon a time ...

Table four

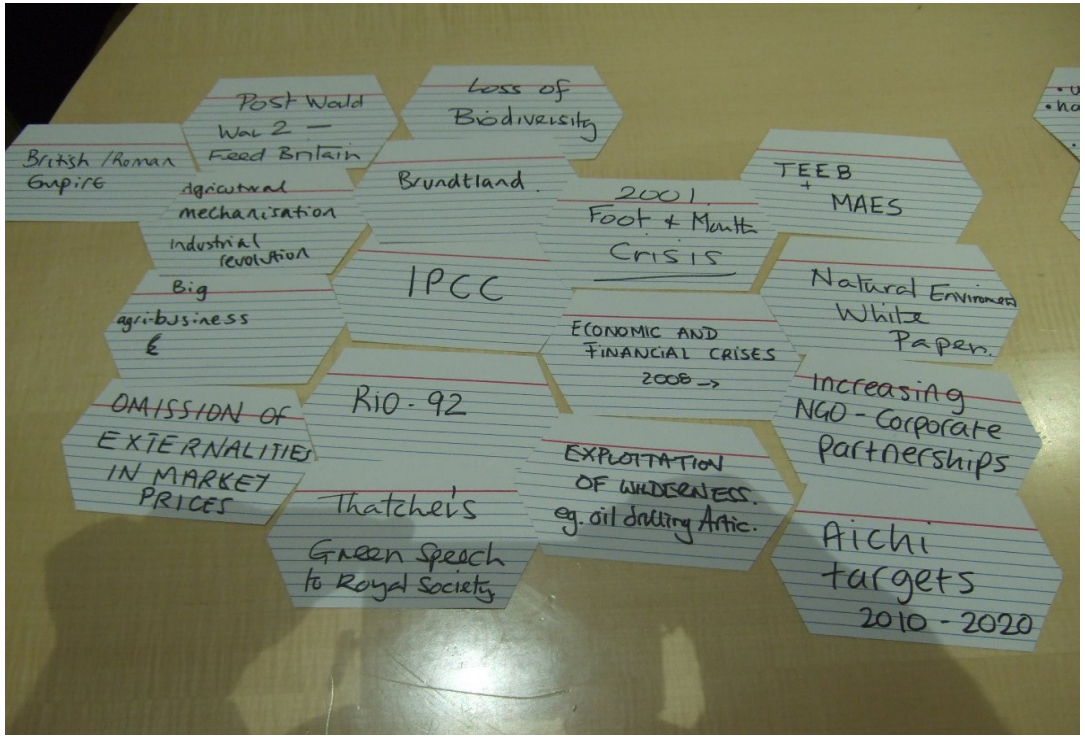

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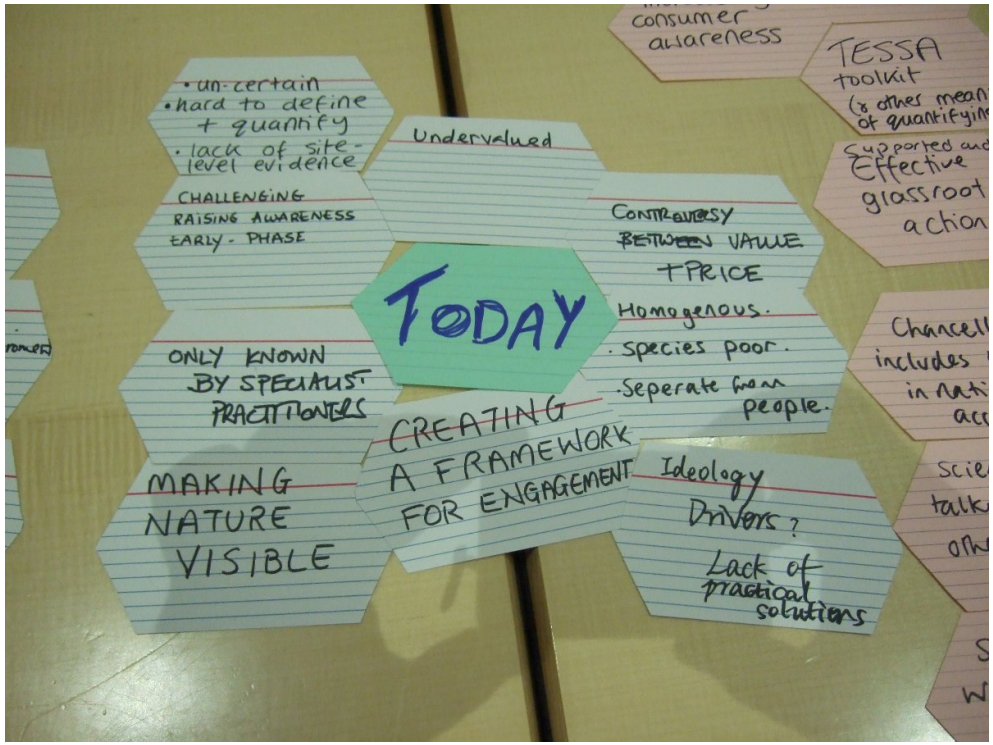
Table four



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… and if we follow the stairway to HEAVEN.

Table four

And if you listen very hard
The tune will come to you at last.
When all are one and one is all
To be a rock and not to roll.

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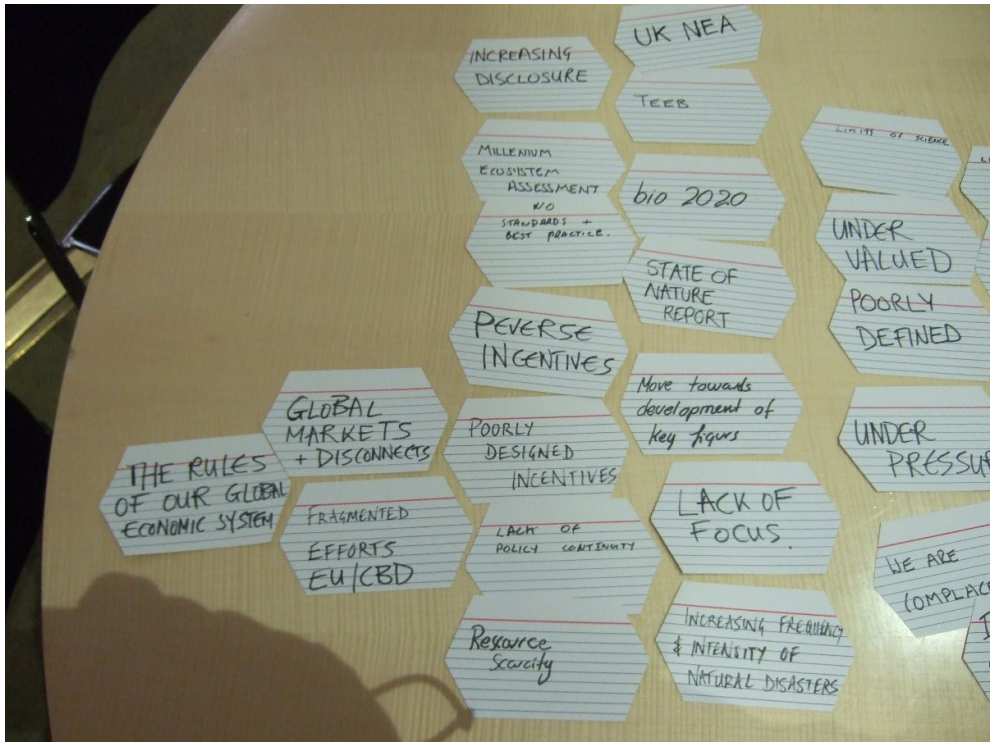
Once upon a time ...

Table five



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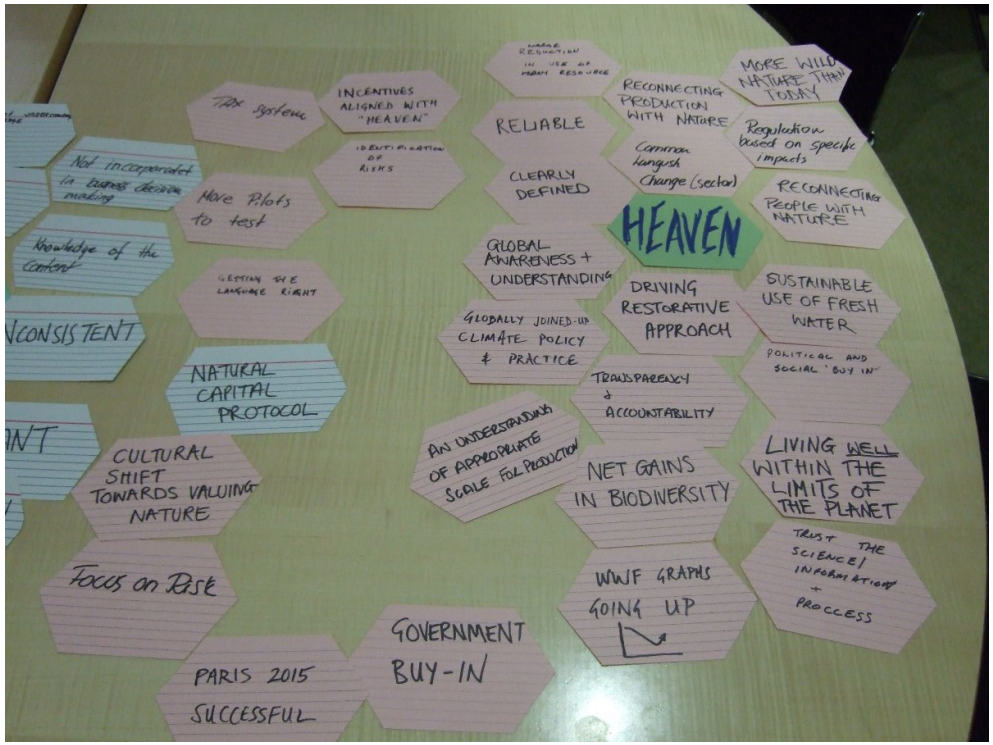

There's a sign on the wall but she wants to be sure
'Cause you know sometimes words have two meanings.
In a tree by the brook, there's a songbird who sings,
Sometimes all of our thoughts are misgiven.

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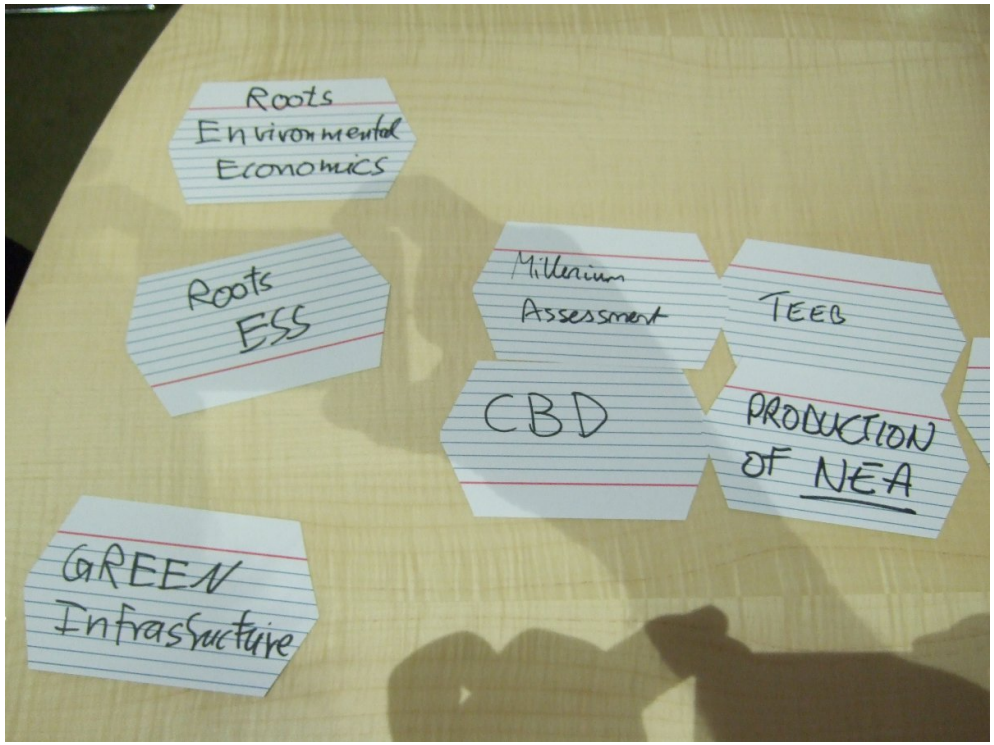
Once upon a time ...

Table six



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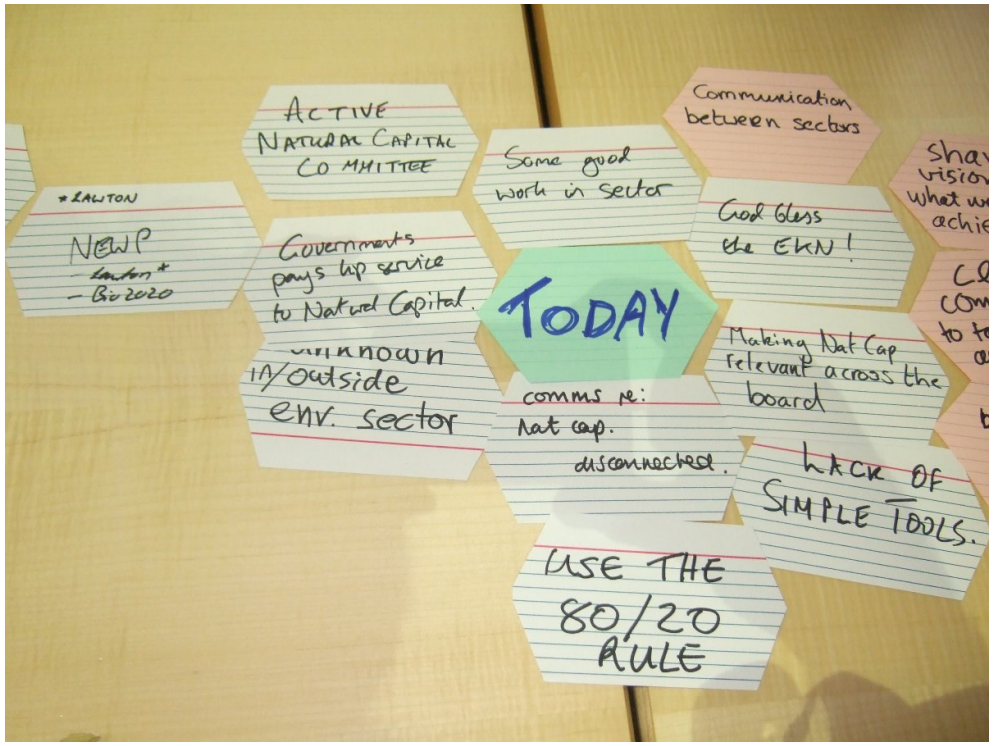

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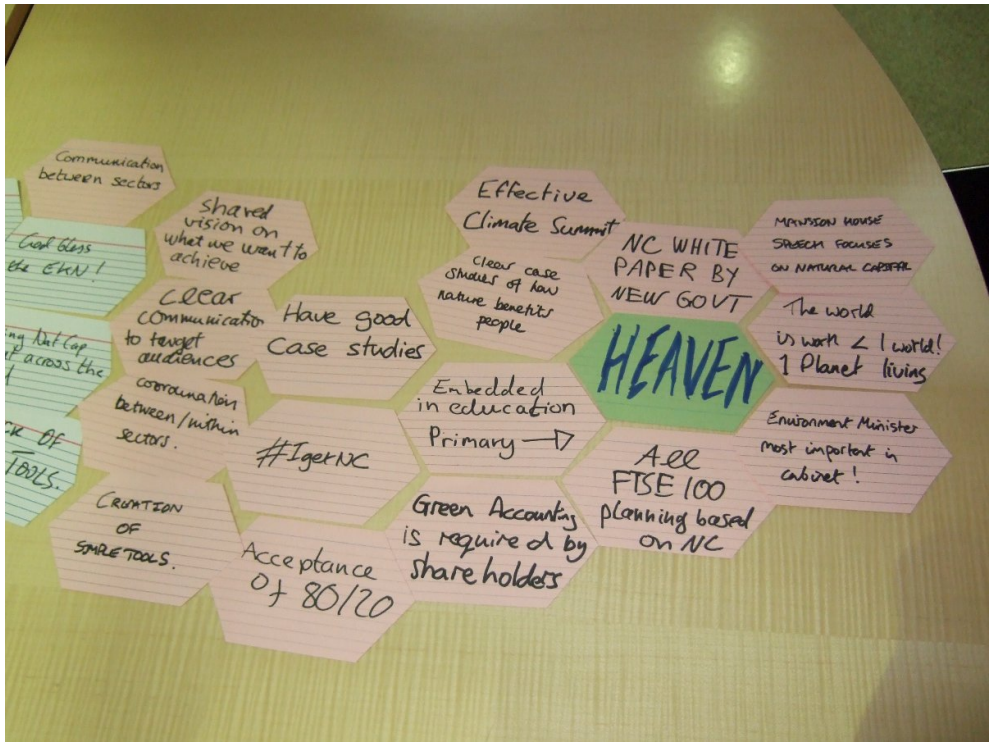
… and if we follow the steps to HEAVEN.

Table six



Now there are Three Steps To Heaven
Just listen and you will plainly see
And as life travels on, and things do go wrong
Just follow steps one, two and three

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Inquiry – Making sense of the stories

We then spent a short amount of time discussing the similarities, differences and surprises contained within the stories created and heard.
This part of the workshop is perhaps the most important of all as it allows participants to make sense of the past, develop an anticipatory awareness of the present and begin to look at combined, collaborative and hopefully participative visions of the future.

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Possible Next Steps

Repeat with other Groups

We now have six stories from participants with a keen interest in Natural Capital.

At the Surrey Nature Partership, in October, we ran an identical session with a mixed group of business people and 'Natural Capital aware' people and the similarities in the 'Heavens' were particularly inspiring.

We/You could now run similar sessions with groups who know very little about the subject.

This workshop could be repeated with other groups of local businesses, stakeholders, decision makers, members of the public, schools, education establishments etc.

Outcomes could be compared, discussed and perhaps published

Impact Assesment methodology

If we had had more time we would have moved on to turning the Heaven into declared 'Benefits of a Natural Capital approach.

One of the most exciting aspects of Participatory Narrative Inquiry is that the emergent 'BENEFIT' themes could be used to index other stories (a business telling a story of its achievement on a particular project for example) to assess how much of each benefit they themselves think they are achieving.

Initially this might be locally based scoring (self measurement) of the impact of efforts.

Ultimately this could become a 'Natural Capital' standard approach to impact measurement.

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Ecology of Knowledge

Narrative – Complexity - Community

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