"Working with, not working on: the theory and practice of collaborative community research programmes".

Margaret Greenfields

This paper sets out to engage with both the ethical and practical aspects of undertaking participatory action research in collaboration with marginalised populations or members of communities who operate within a differential power structure from members of the academy, who be definition are privileged holders of intellectual, social and cultural capital, and potentially, (when academic power manifests as public upholding of dominant knowledge structures), complicit with social inequality (Bourdieu, 1998). My presentation is underpinned by an exposition on the philosophy and methodologies utilised in key research projects on which I have worked. The examples I will present pertain to studies which have explicitly sought to utilise participatory methods as a way of increasing the skills base of research partners (i.e. Gypsies/Traveller and Roma and asylum seeking women from Africa and the Middle-East) whilst ideologically rejecting methodological practices which seek to impose mainstream categories and assumptions on marginalised or excluded peoples (Pollner & Rosenfeld, 2000).

In other words, these were studies which have sought to ethically research 'with' and 'on behalf of' the partner groups, with the intent of delivering outcomes which were both of practical use and policy interest and which could be 'owned' by the participants, rather than carrying out research 'on' members of these communities in a manner which primarily benefits the researcher and their career at the expense of the participants.

As my academic career has developed, I have increasingly embraced collaborative research for reasons of ethics and political commitment. As such, a relatively high percentage of projects which have been undertaken during my period of leadership at the Institute of Diversity Research, Bucks New University have focussed on enhancing community engagement and providing transferable

skills to participants to ensure that the development of categories of knowledge - data which is intrinsically valuable to us as researchers - is delivered through the mechanism of ethical exchange. Thus, it is inherent in our community focused work that instead of subjectifying communities and viewing them through the prism of our 'professional gaze' (Foucault, 1973) that we as researchers are members of a team, (albeit with differing responsibilities from community researchers) and as such are open to challenge, and the requirement to behave as transparently and be held to account as much as our colleagues and co-researchers.

Whilst later in this presentation I discuss the challenges of working in this way, (and make no mistake it can be extremely difficult and requires considerable commitment to praxis[1]); at this stage, it is worth noting that the projects which I will briefly present to you in short case study format, utilise refined principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), a mode of action which actively addresses issues of power (and empowerment) and politics (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). I will set out the case for why PAR is an ethical model which can appropriately be applied to research with disempowered communities, and argue that utilisation of such processes, despite the challenges which can sometimes occur in operationalising this methodology, offers the best means of undertaking politicised and inclusive inter-cultural research which gives 'voice' to those who are frequently unheard and as such lost in policy discourse, people to whom things are 'done' rather than those who can begin to ask for what they need and want.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory Action Research is research that works explicitly *with* and *for* people rather than undertaking research *on* subjects, a mode of inquiry which has roots

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[1] Praxis as a form of action research is rooted in the work of Freire and his school, and has an explicit goal of empowering marginalized peoples whilst aiding them to challenge oppression. See further: Tierney, W. and Sallee, M. (2008) 'Praxis' in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods.* Thousand Oaks, California. Sage Publications.

in the work of the educationalist Paolo Freire (1970) and also that of Antonio Gramsci, who famously declared that all people are intellectuals and philosophers or *"Organic intellectuals".* In particular, Gramsci was preoccupied with fore-grounding the conceptualisation that non-academic (predominantly) working-class people are more than able to take their local knowledge from life experiences, and use that knowledge to effectively address changes and problems in society (Gramsci, 1971, 258), Freire, in his work on critical pedagogy argued that a model which places the "teacher" at the front of the class, "imparting" information to the passive recipient "students", disempowers one half of the dyad and silences them. In contrast, by locating this pedagogic model within a research paradigm it becomes possible to devise translational research where the actors create research models as part of a dynamic process (Freire, 1982) and devise and negotiate the meaning of their findings with the intent of bringing about social change .

Whilst in 'classical' PAR theory – which defines an ideal situation where time and funding are not problematic - the PAR proceeds through repeated cycles, wherein the experienced researchers (typically academic) and members of the partnership community work together to identify major issues and problems which lead into a research project, triggering re-active responses which in turn are researched in an attempt to evaluate the change which has occurred, the reality, in times of fiscal retrenchment is somewhat different. In practice the PAR process is rarely likely to move through more than one cycle. The principle however, that participants in Action Research projects practice critical reflexivity, seek to improve democratic research practice and are focused on generating knowledge and improving their skills and learning rather than merely concentrating on *outcomes*, remain critical to this mode of research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009),

Participatory Action Research is thus an explicitly socio-political mode of research and the way in which it is undertaken is an active statement of political

and policy ideals. Whilst the model can be used to generate knowledge through co-production, and building upon pre-existing community networks offers a tool which permits access to individuals who might otherwise be 'unreachable' ,(as occurred in the Cambridge Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment – see further below and Greenfields, 2008), in other circumstances, (predominantly where a project is exclusively qualitative in nature) use of PAR methods enable silenced voices to be heard and 'untold truths' to be brought into the public domain (Lundy & McGovern, 2006). Where the voices of community researchers are fore-grounded within a narrative, the 'hidden transcripts' (Scott, 1990) which guide (and are embedded within) verbal and practical transactions between people who are marginalised, and those individuals and structures who (potentially) oppress or exclude them, are granted the opportunity to be considered openly. Accordingly, the use of PAR enables the experiences, interpretations, values and discourse of those groups more usually regarded as 'subordinate' in terms of knowledge production to be accorded the respect traditionally paid to data gathered and presented by a group of professional peers engaged in a research undertaking.

The extent of community input into projects and ultimately the degree to which 'professional' researchers/academics control the process of generating knowledge defines which mode of participatory research is followed. In essence there are three core models:

1. Research which involves *Consultation* with community members;
2. *Participatory Research* (where community members are actively involved in design and knowledge development, and
3. *Partnership Research* where all aspects of the project are developed and undertaken within a team consisting of 'academics/professional researchers' and 'community researchers'.

Arnstein (1969) discusses this in her classic 'ladder of participation' comprising a set of steps ranging from 'manipulation' [of the public/research subjects] to 'citizen control' [of a project]. In her model, the ladder is further sub-divided into a triad, consisting of 'citizen power', 'tokenism' and 'non-participation'. At it's worst, 'consultation' can merely be 'tokenism' although Arnstein locates the step of 'partnership' within the domain of 'citizen control', a placement which the authors of this chapter feel does not always adequately reflect the power dynamics inherent in participatory research.

For practitioners engaged in PAR in the twenty first century, projects which locate community engagement at the highest level of the hierarchy, and which practice Partnership Research (co-production of research) in its most developed form should, (at least in theory), involve analysis, writing of the report, editing, delivery of findings and sharing of accrued assets equally between community and professional researchers with all partners' involvement in the process being equally valued. Where this occurs, Arnstein would probably locate such practice on the rung of 'delegated power' or 'citizen control'.

Whilst the research teams engaged in the case study examples sought to carry out full Partnership Research, in practice (constrained largely by funders deliverables and the necessity for the production of technical reports, relatively rigid timetables and the requirements of some aspects of the research, such as use of software and computerised analytical packages) it is probably more realistic to acknowledge that the academic/voluntary sector partners held a greater degree of control (and ultimately responsibility to the funders) in all of the projects. Hence the research under consideration today can be seen as occupying the extreme end of Participatory Research (embedded PAR) rather than full-blown Partnership/ Co-production Research[2].

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[2] At the time when the Cambridge Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment was undertaken this was regarded as a radical enough departure from research undertaken with Gypsies and Travellers in the UK up until that point to be particularly noteworthy (Blackburn,et. al, 2010)

However, our studies do go beyond the level of community member involvement in many action research type studies which have traditionally limited the involvement of community members to the margins, and purely on the terms of the academics or funders of the research. Robinson and Tansey (2006) suggest that this traditional type of involvement is 'dialogic'. However, in more integrated approaches to involving communities there is a 'transformative' element and that those involved go beyond being 'users': "*In this* [transformative] *forum the purpose is to both engage the researched at the problem definition stage and to actively alter the social conditions in which they find themselves*" (pg 152).

Use of PAR is therefore not merely embedded in political activism (a point which we as team members have had to stress on occasion to funders) but there are also sound practical reasons for adopting such a research approach. As Meyer (2004) notes:

> *'Its strength lies in its focus on generating solutions to practical problems and its ability to empower practitioners – getting them to engage with research and subsequent development'* (2004, 454). Thus a *'virtuous circle'* is created by *striv*[ing] *to include the participants' perspective on the data by feeding back findings... and incorporating their responses as new data in the final report* (Meyer, 2004: 454),

 PAR benefits from enhanced quality of data, validation of findings and approval of the way in which the content has been presented, obtained from community participants which in turn adds credibility to the overall study. Whilst there thus clear benefits to using such models, in practice, the challenges (from several different directions) can be substantial.

Having presented the theoretical underpinning – it is now time to explore some examples of how we at IDRICS as a loosely affiliated team have utilised these methods in three projects:

The Case Studies

The Cambridge GTAA (2006)

The first study in the UK to engage with Gypsies and Travellers as PAR team members (Home & Greenfields, 2006).

Background to the project: legal requirement to assessment the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Traveller and Roma in the UK following increasingly high profile disputes over land use – 'squatting' land or purchasing land and setting up sites with out planning (zoning) permission. Intense public/media hostility towards the populations and considerable political resistance to the granting of planning permission for authorised caravan sites (traditional accommodation) for these populations. Increasing conflict across a number of regions of the UK to the setting up of 'camps'. Government commitment to considering level of need as a precursor to requiring local authorities to grant permission for caravan sites in numerous areas.

Challenges – no clear statistical data on the populations; resistance to and fear of authority amongst community members; local authorities reluctant to adequately identify need in case required to provide camps/sites.

Model: Development of PAR study by Greenfields (methodological lead) and Homes (planning lead)

Methods: development of questionnaire on housing/public service need + training of community interviewers from Gypsy/Traveller populations. Input into questionnaire + identification of sample frame + feed-in to topic guide for focus groups. 313 interviews undertaken + series of focus groups.

Pairing of different 'ethnic groups' to support greater knowledge of each other - Irish Travellers and English Gypsies. Literate and illiterate team members working together.

Quality control by academic team

Community members involvement in analysis + validation of findings + presentation of report to Government and local authority politicians

Outcomes – agreed report (community + politicians + academic team) Development of on-going community forum for Gypsies/Travellers and politicians/local agency staff to meet in 'safe space' and debate key issues; planning needs etc. Upskilling of interviewers (all of whom went onto further interviewing/community project employment). Acceptance of model as viable and accepted as 'best practice' in Government advice + replicated elsewhere in the UK

Associated reading: Greenfields and Home (2006); Greenfields and Home, (2008)

The Travellers Economic Inclusion Project (2010)

Background: First economic inclusion study in Europe on the mechanisms and change drivers experienced by Gypsies, Traveller and Roma over recent decades. Set out to explore reasons for economic/employment marginalisation and the routes to success of financially stable members of the populations.

Challenges: as above re: accommodation issues coupled with cultural resistance to discussion of income generation and financial affairs. Elite community members reluctant to disclose ethnicity for fear of racism and loss of employment opportunities. All of England included in sample – devising sampling frame to include different ethnic groups and regions of country + gender/socio-economic stratification.

Methods: smaller group of experienced community interviewers involved in depth interviewing + development of questionnaire + covering larger areas. One-to-one feedback for participants as required + through community projects. Dissemination of findings via report + pod-casts + conferences

Outcomes – Department of Work and Pensions some take up of specific recommendations. Funding obtained for number of community groups to provide training on tax, book-keeping and project development as identified as key drivers of economic success for those involved in forms of 'traditional' employment practice. Funding for single- gendered groups re community development project upskilling for women and manual skills training for young men. On-going monitoring by funding bodies re: success and longitudinal change – impacted now by austerity budgets/funding cuts.

Associated reading:

Ryder & Greenfields, (2010)

Refugee and Asylum Seeking Womens Project (2012-13)

Background: Recognition that refugee and asylum seeking women are often exceptionally vulnerable or traumatised and face repeat victimisation whilst in the UK. (e.g. sexual violence; mental health issues; homelessness and exploitation by legal advisors). IDRICS approached by charity (IARS) to utilise our PAR experience in supporting RASW in London to identify the key challenges they face and 'speak to power'. To date first project with the aim of supporting RASW to train health and legal professionals on their experiences in seeking services with the intent of improving care and services whilst upskilling women to become community advocates.

Challenges: diverse linguistic/literacy skills; recruiting women with time/energy and stability (dispersal practices) to participate. Shame/stigma re a number of issues; fear of complaining/challenging legal and health care professionals. Legal status of women may be precarious.

Methods: IDRICS advised on and co-wrote the funding application to ensure time and resources available for programme in recognition of challenges faced.

Recruitment of women through diverse organisations/advice groups. Interviewing for vulnerability of potential PARs + linguistic skills. Identification of mixture of ethnicities, religions and backgrounds. Ethics and skills training. IDRICS/MG involvement in key areas of project e.g. Development of training materials for IARS and PAR. Delivery of training sessions re thematic identification of topics and supporting women with analysis and development of recommendations for training programmes for delivery by RASW to health/legal professionals .

ONGOING – report to be developed and piloted with RASW. Training materials to be planned and devised in differing formats – e.g DVD/face-to-face delivery/VLE etc.

Outcomes to date: Guidance on interviewing/PAR for RASW (see below under associated reading). Generation of presentation of programme by women for professionals, conclusion of analysis and identification of key aspects of programme to be delivered to professionals by the PAR/community advocates in training.

Associated reading: Greenfields, (2013)

Challenges and benefits in using PAR approaches

One of the challenges for PAR approaches is the potential for conflict between traditional vested interests and community groups newly being involved through PAR techniques. Orr and Bennett (2010) note that:

> "*Co-producing research entails tussling with the dialectic between unity and difference, sovereignty and interdependence, the self and the other. Co-producing research holds the potential for creative coalitions but also the possibility of the clash of civilizations*" (pg 202)

Clearly there are issues of diversity and potential conflict between groups, and so it is important to get the method for PAR/co-production approaches right from the start, and to use a medium and a language that can empower those previously disenfranchised in the traditional research processes. It is encumbent on

researchers using PAR approaches not to leave an already marginalised group, such as Asylum seeking women, or Roma, Gypsies and Travellers, further excluded or endangered through conflict with other groups, funders, agents of the state and those with vested interests such as representatives of the media who may ridicule or twist the outcomes to suit their own ends.

A second challenge often posed to PAR (academic) researchers is that where research is co-produced, there may be difficulty in having clear lines of accountability in the process and the outcomes. It is true that PAR methods are messier than the traditional 'academic in charge' approach. There may be challenges in setting aims and objectives for the research and there are still power relationship shifts at play in the process. The research presented in this paper (embedded PAR rather than full partnership/ co-production) in all instances had a 'client' – either a local authority lead partner or a voluntary organisation who commissioned the work, even when it had been identified in collaboration with communities themselves. In these cases the lines of accountablity tend to follow contractual obligations, but still incorporate changes in process and method suggested by the community participants in the research, where this did not fundamentally clash with core research aims and objectives.

Thirdly, there is an argument over ownership of analysis. Traditional research often involves the academic interpreting the voices of interviewees from within the academic's own epistemological framework, without having properly understood the culture and world view of the 'subjects' of the research. In having the traditional 'subject' as co-producer of the research, at all stages – including analysis – results in deeper understanding of others' views and richer examination of findings. This can be a challenge to traditional academic hierarchy and ownership of views and ideas and is not universally welcomed by all researchers.

A fourth challenge to PAR suggests that through messier lines of accountability and control, there is a possibility of reduced quality of data. It is important that anyone involved in research projects, whether they are a traditional academic early career researcher, or a community member involved in a piece of research, receives appropriate training on methods, data collection and ethics. The pieces of research discussed in this paper ensured such training was in place and this helped to keep the quality of the work to as high a standard as possible.

Finally, there is an argument that those academics involved in PAR approaches will lose their independence and their ability to think critically and dispassionately. There is an assumption that academic-led, traditional research means that the researcher is detached and does not bring personal views to the project. What is more likely is that in traditional research, the personal views of the researcher are hidden. With PAR or co-production approaches the academic becomes much more personally involved through interaction with potentially marginalised communities. However, there are real benefits of increased trust, richer data and ultimately 'transformative' outcomes (Robinson and Tansey, 2006) that come from embedded PAR approaches.

One response to the argument that non-participatory modes of research are more reliable than the methods for which I argue is to challenge the concept of scientific neutrality. At IDRICS when engaging in discourse with opponents of PAR methods we propose that the notion that one can be neutral is a fallacy whilst acknowledging that the qualitative researcher cannot assume they can observe with detachment and certainty in the same manner as a scientist working in a laboratory (Robson, 1993: 65). Good quality research and sound outcomes are more likely to be forged by the researcher explicitly acknowledging the impact and influence of their personal views and the life history that they bring to the research field whilst remaining scrupulously critical of their own practice, engaging with trusted – yet critical - colleagues who will challenge their

findings, and remaining impassively incorruptible in the face of potentially conflicting pressures from research funders, commissioners and participants.

Such is the isolation and exclusion experienced by some communities and vulnerable individuals that the action researcher (and indeed community research partners involved in the interview process) will in all likelihood feel at times overwhelmed with appeals for help and assistance for a broad range of problems. Here caution needs to prevail, if the researcher is relied upon too greatly as a source of primary support rather than directing those in need to agencies better equipped and resourced to give help, then research outcomes and funding could potentially be compromised or the researcher find themselves in conflict with their primary aim. The action researcher therefore has to be both selective and focused in forwarding a 'change agenda' as well as coldly self-critical. The value of clear reflexive practice is at its most important in such circumstances to ensure that the academic researcher does not became so engaged that their practice falls below the standard of professionalism owed to the community, themselves and their professional discipline.

The challenges and benefits discussed above can thus be summarised as:

Challenges/ arguments	Benefits
- Competing aims/ potential conflict - Unclear lines of accountability - Reduced ownership of analysis for academic - Quality of data - Academic overly involved, not detached from 'subject'	- Process allows traditionally marginalised voices to be heard - Competing claims for the research agenda can be made - Academic voice does not drown out others during analysis – 'subjects' are not misinterpreted or misquoted. - Community members are trained to ensure quality of data

	– this has a capacity building affect.
	• Academic benefits from being part of a transformative research agenda – sees the impact.

PAR and the Institutional Setting

Having considered above the key 'external' challenges it is time to contemplate how the academic team's home institution can help or hinder their staff in seeking to engage in PAR. Whilst the challenges I refer to below may appear substantial in terms of challenging institutional practices and bureaucracies I content that to successfully manage PAR it is necessary to have a top-down commitment to flexibility to ensure that community members are able to engage in research teams on terms which do not fundamentally discriminate against them or downplay and disrespect their circumstances and knowledge.

Ethics Clearance: Quite clearly academic practitioners are bound by sets of guidance and rules which take account of professional expectations and carry a clear awareness of the power differentials which exist between researcher and researched. Based on our own experience, PAR community team members are fully competent and discerning in recognising ethical dilemmas and appropriate behaviours, frequently arguing and debating ethics issues with a high degree of sophistication coupled with an awareness of the lived reality of community lives.

Where conflicts and disagreements can however arise is over a) the slowness of procedures – why we are asked does it take 3-6 months to obtain ethics clearance for a study which PAR community members are willing to participate in now, and to which they may not be able to commit in the longer-term future, and

b) why, if someone agrees that they are ready to take part do we require written consent forms and recorded data which may act as a barrier to engagement?

Why too, c) if PAR community members indicate their support for a project and a willingness to engage, do our ethics committees sometimes require that 'hoops' be jumped through which seem irrelevant and pointless to the PAR community members who co-devise the programme, as well as to the participants themselves?

The solution I propose is that whilst full and frank debate must take place in ethics committee settings and community participant's views and knowledge of the population they are working with are taken into account. Flexibility will on occasion be required to ensure that a project even gets off the ground and that participants and community interviewers/activists do not walk away from engagement at an early stage – believing that the academy is both out of touch and rigid in outlook.

For example – put in place modes of oral reporting and chains of advice in relation to concerns over child protection – allow someone else to make a report as required rather than expect a community member to take such responsibility – they will simply not provide clear information if they believe that they will be tasked with taking action and providing reports – it is better to be flexible than to fail or to not be aware of a potential tragedy or accident waiting to happen…

Barriers to payment of community members
One of the most problematic issues I have ever encountered – on a regular basis – is concerns over payment of a) community interviewers and b) research participants. Whilst it may be that in South Africa different regulations apply the minute and rigid requirements for fiscal monitoring and plethora of forms required to ensure that participants are paid has led to the loss of a number of interviewers from projects as well as enormous wells of good-will. On occasion I have been required to pay interviewers out of my own pocket as they have waited so long for payment or have reported earnings to 'Benefits offices' and

had their financial support cut as a result. Where I have made personal payment I have not always been able to have the expenditure refunded leaving me personally out of pocket.

Requirements that precise mileage records are kept along with strict deadlines over payment cut-off dates and the repeated return of claim forms if a signature is slightly wrong or a form is incompletely filled in, or the wrong version of an updated form is used have also caused huge difficulties leading to large amounts of research time being spent on sorting out administrative hiccups and working to appease outraged or upset interviewers.

There is no 'one size fits all' model which works for PAR groups and there is a need for finance departments and senior management to be aware of the need to ensure that financial matters are monitored but in a non-intrusive manner which does not lead to concerns that PAR community team members are 'under suspicion'. E.g. think about alternative payment methods – would food be more acceptable than money? Vouchers, school uniforms or fuel – ask the community team what is needed – then find a way to make the payments in a timely manner and in a way which meets the needs of the community in question.

Institutional support for academic researchers under pressure from commissioners or external agencies – e.g. media.
As a practitioner I have on several occasions experienced hostility and pressure from commissioners who do not like the outcomes of research, or who seek to challenge reports on the grounds of undue influence by community members (see above). In addition, I have experienced hostile media coverage and resultant threats to my well-being/anonymous letters sent to the university as a result of my perceived 'championing' of unpopular groups or communities.

In addition – PAR community members may not have a clear idea of how their involvement in a project may potentially impact on future employment prospects

and/or public perceptions of their work. Whilst this is clearly an issue to be considered during training and within ethics committee debates there is I suggest a clear requirement that the institution steps in to support their staff and PAR teams from external hostility – throwing a cloak of protection over those engaged in PAR and community engagement on their behalf. The impact of a Vice Chancellor or Head of School stepping up to challenge the detractors or issuing a media statement which supports a research team is profound – and repaid in loyalty and commitment by all members of the team.

Whilst the above factors merely highlight some elements which require consideration when engaging in community engagement research it is clear that the monolithic structures which surround universities can lead to distancing from populations and communities who we wish to reach. It is therefore critically important that the most senior management structures and hierarchies remain alert (through the mechanisms of supportive line managers and department Heads) of the small but challenging issues which can make or break a project and lead to exhaustion and distress for harassed researchers on the ground.

Forward planning, appropriate levels of support, trusted and experience administrative staff; responsiveness and flexibility are therefore the keys to foreseeing dilemmas and devising reactive strategies before a minor problem becomes a major crisis which leads to the loss of trust in the institution, the academic team and the overall process of PAR for academics and community members alike.

It is perhaps a truism to state that for every careful year of trust built up by researchers and academic teams, it only takes a week of neglect and careless treatment to damage the relationship with marginalized communities irreparably. Academic institutions therefore need to remember that those who have been pushed to the margins throughout their lives or inter-generationally, who are impoverished and damaged, emotionally, financially, spiritually or in their body

and mind, tend to feel that exploitation or harsh treatment will happen again and again. Accordingly, suspicious concern about the motives of the 'authorities' can harden into rejection all too easily as a result of careless bureaucratic restrictions. Where that occurs, both good research and the opportunity to achieve positive change can be destroyed through nothing more serious than simple thoughtlessness or lack of appropriate processes which meet the needs of 'ordinary people's' daily lives and struggles to get by. 'Mindfulness' is thus perhaps more critically important to successful PAR than is having the most brilliant scholars in the country working on a programme of research.

Conclusions

Whilst the process of undertaking ethical collaborative research is therefore not unproblematic, requiring in particular the need for institutional flexibility (financial, administrative and methodological) as well as a keen awareness of the tensions inherent in leading and undertaking research which frequently place the academic (and by default their institution who must be prepared to back their staff in the face of hostility) in a role of scientist-advocate-activist; the benefits in terms of enhanced ethical practice, the development of an empowered community and the impacts on the individual researcher, institution and broader academy cannot be under-estimated.

Whilst all of these factors detailed above require clear advance conceptualisation and modelling of alternatives; a hierarchical commitment to supporting staff experiencing multiple 'pulls'; and the development of strategies for ensuring, deep, (and ethical) engagement with such dilemmas as may occur, is, in my opinion the key preparation to enable the delivery of best academic practice in community settings.

Not all research projects can emulate the scope of participation as set out by the above examples and I would suggest that this too must be realistically considered when planning PAR to ensure that participants from all 'sides' are not

offered unrealistic hopes. In terms of our levels of engagement I acknowledge that we were fortunate in that we have worked with an increasingly experienced team and the projects outlined above were all relatively well funded and resourced (something which is decreasingly common in the UK in recent months with the impact of 'austerity measures') . However, most forms of research provide scope and opportunity to give something back to the 'researched' in terms of participation and honest dialogue between the parties to a study and in so doing, such research embellishes both ethical social science practice and reputation and aids dialogue between those in positions of power and those who are traditionally voiceless and forgotten in the ever 'busier' modern world.

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