Community university partnership research in practice at the University of Brighton, England: Processes and Pitfalls

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Introduction

This article examines the contribution of a community university partnership programme, based in the South East of England, to a global knowledge movement that recognises indigenous and other ways of knowing and prioritises the lived knowledge of minority groups. It tracks some of the developments in relationships between university academics, local practitioners and activists over Cupp's seven year history and explores how far we have been able to deliver on our commitment to social justice. Situating this partnership within a broader global context it considers the growing expectations on higher education to play a role in social change and the pressures and possibilities that accompany such expectations.

The Community University Partnership programme began in 2003 as an externally funded project supported by an American philanthropic trust. While similar projects (focussed on Service Learning) had been in existence in the US and Canada since the mid 1970s, the UK has seen a different history of knowledge partnerships and local engagement. Like many other new universities (coming into existence in 1993 from a former polytechnic), Brighton has had a long history of involvement with its local community. With a strong vocational and professional curriculum since its early days as a teacher training college, it has always worked in partnership with local organisations and been implicated in the local economy. These early partnerships were framed more in terms of service to these professions rather than in generating knowledge with community groups.

However the context in which Cupp came into being in the early 21st century is one in which the role of universities as agents of social change was taking on a new relevance. The UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in Paris in 1998 was convened to re-examine educational policies in the context of the new millennium. Among the 15 fundamental principles established during the conference was the use of knowledge generated for the benefit of society and the importance of

reflection on the ethical dimensions of knowledge. The declaration it produced emphasised the importance for Higher Education of social responsibility and the need to ensure that teaching, research and dissemination were ‘mutually enriching’ with tangible outcomes for society.

It was in this context that Brighton was invited to produce a business plan for funding that would support an experimental approach to defining the role of a UK university in relation to its local community. The plan agreed to:

- Provide a structured opportunity for consolidating the identification of local community aspirations and needs in respect of the University
- Capture the activity, enthusiasm and expertise of University staff and students and community members to address those aspirations and needs
- Work closely with local and regional communities to identify a joint programme of work that meets mutual needs and draws on mutual experience and expertise (University of Brighton 2002:6).

It is important to acknowledge that the initiative for enhancing a relationship with local community groups did not originate in the local community but externally to both the university and the locality, as such it was not something the community asked for. It emerged at a time when the role of universities was under debate and was led more by a redefinition of that role than in response to community requests for support. This in itself has helped frame the way that Cupp has developed in terms of addressing issues of inequality and disadvantage in ways that are of mutual benefit rather than being primarily concerned with issues of transformation and empowerment. The programme did however, set out to define what local aspirations there might be in relation to the university and how these might be met and Cupp’s early work involved exploring this with a range of local partners. An analysis of the approaches used in some of these early projects illustrates the contribution that community university partnerships work has been able to make towards changing dominant views of what constitutes knowledge.

For the past hundred years universities have been fundamentally concerned with the definition, creation, transmission and application of knowledge. Bourner sees this as the influence of Humboldt in the late 19th century and an approach that still dominates many academic departments in Europe. In Humboldt’s own words (in translation):

“At the highest level, the teacher does not exist for the sake of the student: both teacher and student have their justification in the common pursuit of knowledge” (Humboldt 1970:243)

Some of the characteristics of the Humboldtian University include:

- Promotion of the accumulation of new knowledge as the super-ordinate goal of the university
- Development of the PhD as a training for research
- Elevation of the principle of ‘subject specialisation’ over the principle of the ‘unity of knowledge’
- Elevation of science to the highest level in the academic hierarchy, a position previously held by the classics
- Elevation of the role of critical thinking in higher education above that of aesthetic or moral sensibility
- Elevation of scepticism as the proper attitude of the scholar
- Elevation of a secular ethos above the prevailing faith-based ethos

(taken from Bourner 2010, unpublished paper)

Strictly speaking, this connotes a one way process in which the university is best placed to generate knowledge and which those outside of the university might make use of. It compartmentalises knowledge within discipline structures and suggests a positivist approach to knowledge generation. Such an attitude is still prevalent among many academic schools and is apparent in the many knowledge transfer programmes a university runs. These are programmes where PhD researchers and academic supervisors are able to work on problems which are of particular relevance to industry, often science based, and involve them in ‘transferring’ this knowledge to non university partners. Such a view leaves little space for Freireian views of knowledge where participant understanding is prioritised over and above that of the neutral outsider or scientific researcher, and the introduction of participatory research into academy has been a slow one. The development of community university research partnerships raises new questions about what constitutes knowledge, who defines it, who owns it and how it should be articulated.

Gibbons makes a useful differentiation between Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge. Traditional academic research tends to prioritise Mode 1 knowledge which is ‘pure,

disciplinary, homogeneous, expert-led, supply-driven, hierarchical, peer reviewed, and almost exclusively university-based' (Gibbons, Limoges et al. 1994). Collaborative research leans towards Mode 2, which Gibbons describes as 'applied, problem-centred, trans-disciplinary, heterogeneous, hybrid, demand-driven, entrepreneurial, network-embedded' and emerges from collaborative and cross disciplinary approaches. He sees the progress of this shift throughout the last decade of the 20th century.

'The sites of (scientific) problem formulation and negotiation have moved from their previous domains in government, industry and universities into the agora…. the public space in which 'science meets the public and in which the public 'speaks back to science'….the space, *par excellence'* for the production of socially robust knowledge' (Gibbons 2005)

Watson (who as the then vice chancellor was responsible for the existence of Cupp at the University of Brighton) describes the difficulties for universities as a result of the changed 'size, scope and connectivity of the information and knowledge to which academics and their special communities of enquiry contribute' (Watson 2003:6).

'In terms of community it presents a challenge to universities to be of and not just in the community; not simply to engage in "knowledge-transfer" but to establish a dialogue across the boundary between the university and its community which is open-ended, fluid and experimental' (Watson 2003)

Cupp in a nutshell

Cupp's early research partnerships demonstrate some of the shift described by Watson and are part of a bigger story. The Research helpdesk was established to respond to community requests. Some of these requests were for research support, others for research training or for academics or students to undertake research on a community's behalf. Some projects have been able to work in a truly participatory way, responding in a way the community could accommodate to build capacity and agency within groups to define and execute their own research. Other requests have been subject to the constraints of capacity, funding and time and have

resulted in the university taking responsibility for research outcomes on behalf of community groups. Many have thrown up the different intentions for a research project held by academics and those immediately affected by its outcomes.

Many of the 150 plus research projects undertaken in the past 8 years have emerged as a result of enquiries to the Cupp Helpdesk. The Helpdesk aims to be a user-friendly point of entry to the University for Local Community Groups who are seeking university support with challenges they face, but who do not know how to access specific individuals who might be able to help. Some of the most typical Helpdesk enquiries include support with evaluation and assistance with understanding the evidence base in a particular area. The Helpdesk also fields internal enquiries from university academics and students seeking community partnerships. A helpdesk manager is the initial point of contact, and she is supported by 'The Senior Researchers Group', a team of academics who meet bimonthly to consider how best to respond to helpdesk queries. Wherever possible, enquiries are matched with academics who would themselves find the partnership beneficial to furthering their own research or teaching interests. Members of the Senior Researchers Group are given a token payment for their time. The first port of call for most enquiries is a face to face meeting between a member of the SRG and the enquirer and five hours of academic time is provided free of charge. People hear about the Helpdesk via the university website, through various local publications, e-lists and increasingly, by word of mouth.

Conceived in the original application for CUPP funding through Atlantic Philanthropies, and corroborated through a needs assessment with community partners, the rationale through which a helpdesk would assist the process of change in community engagement was set out by David Watson in his role as vice chancellor:

The helpdesk will be available to support members of the community and community groups carry out their own research and/or access University expertise. This is likely to be a «virtual» desk in terms of the connections to the range of University expertise, but will have a human face in the form of a helpdesk officer who can navigate and negotiate within the University in support of community contacts. A community research fund will accompany the helpdesk and enable University staff time and other expertise and resources to be made available in response to proposals from community groups. (University of Brighton 2002)

As well as research partnerships emerging through initial Helpdesk enquiries, Cupp has been successful at drawing in some specific research and knowledge exchange funds. The UK governments' Higher Education Funding Council for England funded two initiatives: The Brighton and Sussex Community Knowledge Exchange which funded larger projects, (with totals for each project ranging from £5000-£25,000) and The South East Coastal Communities Programme which funded four £90,000 projects in the Sussex region. Moving away from the earlier notion of knowledge transfer in which universities 'transfer' their knowledge to community groups, both BSCKE and SECC have worked with the term knowledge 'exchange' in which mutuality is key, and in which university and community knowledge is equally valued and prioritised.

The introduction of Student Community Engagement was part of a second phase of the Cupp story. Influenced partly by Service learning programmes in the United States it develops opportunities for students to work with community groups as part of their discipline based learning. Some programmes include modules where students work in community organisations as part of their second year undergraduate programme. They are assessed through a series of reflective assignments which require them to interrogate their experience in the light of scholarly academic texts. Using Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb 1984) they are encouraged to see the equal relevance of experiential participation and theoretical conceptualisation to a holistic understanding of the world. In many ways this links to Freire's concept of praxis which links action to reflection and to change. It also reflects Freire's 'humanising education' as:

'the path through which men and women can become conscious about their presence in the world. The way they act and think when they develop all of their capacities, taking into consideration their needs, but also the needs and aspirations of others' (Freire and Frei Betto 1985:14-15)

Some of these students go on to focus their third year dissertations on aspects of their practical experience and, at M level they are able to take on a piece of live research for a community organisation as part of their Master's degree.

Through its teaching programmes the university plays a role in framing the status of different kinds of knowledge among future researchers. By working alongside practitioners and community members and learning from them students are

encouraged to see knowledge drawn from lived experience as equally valid to their academic learning, and research as contributing to and being informed by practice. Taylor and Fransen illustrate this in their working paper on the role of higher education in development and social change, (2004). They suggest that “linking universities and communities” (such as Cupp at the University of Brighton) is one way to create “new understandings of the transformative potential of experiential learning with social relevance” (Taylor and Fransen 2004: pg 20).

Conventional understandings of the nature of learning in HE assume the participation of an academic who teaches and a student who learns... however (community partnerships) introduce an additional participant: the community practitioner. Like the academic and the student the practitioner plays a valuable role as an educator as well as a learner. All three may engage in different spaces depending on the nature of the interaction between the university and community…. Community developers/mobilisers, field practitioners, academics and students (can) work together and learn from each other as ‘critical scholar-practitioners’. (Taylor and Fransen 2004: pg 20)

Through its help desk, its project work and its student programme Cupp is able to respond to community requests for support in ways that are mutually beneficial to community needs, student learning and academic research. In terms of the aims set for it in 2003, and the priorities of the 1998 World Conference on Education it provides an example of a socially committed university that is concerned with the ethical dimensions of knowledge created for the benefit of society. It also provides evidence of valuable partnerships between the community and the academy that can contribute to the co-creation of knowledge.

However before claims can be made for any radical participatory outcomes a deeper analysis is necessary. Freire’s work emerged from a very different period in history and was concerned with the education and subsequent empowerment of those living under poverty and oppression in Brazil. It has been influential in community and adult education, and in the development of participatory action research all over the world. Although Cupp makes no specific claims to participatory approaches, the nature of the work it undertakes is often drawn under the same banner as participatory action research and some of our own projects too explicitly define themselves as such. Freire’s concern with the knowledge and empowerment of oppressed peoples, with the importance of the lived knowledge of minority

groups and with using that knowledge to challenge oppression, speaks to much of Cupp's work. All Cupp projects are concerned with addressing issues of disadvantage and social exclusion and with how global issues of poverty and oppression are played out in a local context. However, the tensions in partnership working and the different constraints on communities and universities often undermine participatory approaches. Furthermore, not all community partners want to participate in the research process, and welcome the opportunity for academics to work out a problem on their behalf. Some explicitly commission projects such as service evaluations which, from a strategic perspective, need to be completely independent of their organisation. How far and in what ways groups are able to use the knowledge generated through partnership working for their own empowerment is also a pertinent question.

In Cupp, we have developed other knowledge typologies in the tradition of Gibbons. We have experimented with notions of type 3, 4 and 5 knowledge – with type 5 being explicitly co-produced by the community and university (Hart, Maddison et al. 2007:5). We have also elaborated our programme with the explicit aim of supporting projects that can demonstrate mutual benefit for both community partners and the university. However, for the purposes of this collective volume, we have seen fit to examine our programme through the lens of participatory research frameworks. The following section outlines John Gaventa's framework, leading on, in the final part of this article, to a consideration of where Cupp projects fit in relation to it.

Participatory research frameworks

There are a number of frameworks that could be applied to assessing Community University Research projects. Gaventa's model (table 1) differentiates between traditional, participatory and collaborative research in terms of the different stages of the research process, dissemination and follow up. Where traditional research is researcher controlled and led participatory research places the community as an equal partner in all research stages, and in control of both the research concept and the outcomes from research findings.

"Essentially Participatory Action Research (PAR) is research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and

other contexts which make sense of it. … Participatory action research is not just research which is hoped that will be followed by action. It is action which is researched, changed and re-researched, within the research process by participants. Nor is it simply an exotic variant of consultation. Instead, it aims to be active co-research, by and for those to be helped. Nor can it be used by one group of people to get another group of people to do what is thought best for them – whether that is to implement a central policy or an organisational or service change. Instead it tries to be a genuinely democratic or non-coercive process whereby those to be helped, determine the purposes and outcomes of their own inquiry" (Wadsworth, Y, 1998:1)

In essence few community university partnership projects are able to fit easily into the mould of participatory action research and many of them move in and out of participatory approaches at different stages in the partnership process. While a number of ideas for research originate in the community, community groups often look to university partners to take the lead in the early stages of working together. In reality many fall into a broader more fluid category of commissioned research, (though generally without payment) where university partners take on research projects on behalf of a local community partner. The process of negotiating research priorities and approaches is a difficult one and while this may be possible as part of a mature partnership where both parties have worked together before, new partnerships often struggle with issues of leadership and direction. The revised model in table 2, showing the sequential stages in a research process perhaps better illustrates how projects move in and out of different participatory, collaborative and traditional stages. Partners take on different levels of responsibility at different points in a project's life and any subsequent transformation or empowerment is perhaps as much to do with how the outcomes of the research are used as who is directing the research process.

The Range of Approaches to CU Partnerships

One of Cupp's earliest experimental projects involved research into education and employment progression routes for refugees. It was developed as a pilot for future Cupp projects in order to explore ways in which the university might work with refugees in the city. The research approach could be defined as traditional, with academic researchers using a range of quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data from the refugee community. Despite including a range of local organisations as community partners and using refugees as interviewers their

role was more as community gatekeepers rather than co-researchers. Similarly the results of the research were very much in the hands of the university.

The following recommendations have been informed, to a large extent, by the suggestions offered by participants in the research. In order for these recommendations to be addressed, the successful partnerships established via this project will need to be maintained and further developed. Whilst it is hoped that the contents of this research will be of interest and use to other Higher Education Institutions, it is recognised that a specific commitment will be necessary from the University of Brighton in relation to examination of its own processes and procedures which, in turn, will facilitate access to HE for refugees. (Report recommendations, Banks and McDonald 2003)

A second follow up project undertaken by the University of Sussex took an active decision to use a participatory approach from the start and began by commissioning some training in participatory methodologies for the academics and their co-researchers (Morrice, Addise, Shaafi and Woolridge 2007). The evaluation report makes the following conclusions:

Having identified and established the research team the reality of working together over the remaining fourteen months was a process of constant evolution and experimentation. Power and issues of inequality were embedded in the project from the start. It was the university that had written and submitted the project proposal with the community partners only coming on board once the funding to enable them to participate had been secured. However, having started life as a university-led project it had been envisaged that once the research group was up and running that they would increasingly take a lead in determining the priorities and direction of the project. In retrospect this was to underestimate the power dynamics involved of working with individuals who come from marginalised and excluded groups.

Issues associated with the refugee experience interrupted and intervened in the project, often taking precedence. Among the issues to impact on the working of the partnerships were homelessness, a deportation order and fear of travelling on buses following a racist incidence. Like other socially and economically vulnerable groups preoccupations with finding solutions to social situations are often just below the surface. All of these, coupled with everyday pressures of trying to juggle other work,

study and home commitments often made it difficult for the whole research group to meet up and the composition of meetings tended to fluctuate with often only two or three partners meeting up at any one time. As the partners came through the university's previous work some of the researchers knew each other. Although they all shared a common agenda of wishing to raise awareness of issues facing refugees and asylum seekers they weren't representing the interests of one single community and instead had their own individual agendas and interests. These factors combined made the process of developing a sense of group identity and common purpose slow, which in turn made it more difficult to establish more equal partnership working between community and university. (Morrice et al. 2007:111)

Community Partners were specifically asked whether the outputs of the project might make a difference to refugee communities:

It's difficult to know whether it makes a difference to refugee communities. They think its better that their voices are heard and they know something will come out of this research. May be an article, may be people's awareness will be increased. They know there won't be drastic changes tomorrow, but they want to participate; they want their voices to be heard, they don't want to keep quiet. (Morrice 2007:116)

Despite this project trying rigorously to follow a participatory approach, it ends with the sense that community partners are largely passive and that power resides with the university to ensure that "something will come out of this research. Maybe an article…." (Morrice: Research report, 2004). The community members involved in the partnership do not immediately see a way in which they can use the knowledge generated to change things.

It seems from the evaluation that this was due principally to two key factors. The first involved the decision to undertake the research and the perceived need for it which originated in the university, partners were brought on board at a later stage. The second was the life situation of the community partners and the difficulties they faced on a daily basis which "interrupted and intervened" in the project. Although these issues were associated with their status as refugees, as Morrice points out such difficulties are prevalent in many socially excluded groups where "preoccupations with finding solutions to social situations are often just below the

surface. All of these, coupled with everyday pressures of trying to juggle other work, study and home commitments often made it difficult" (Morrice 2007:111). It is not hard to deduce that when such difficulties prohibit partners from taking an active and equal role in a research project, then leading significant social change, despite the knowledge they have generated, will for them seem almost impossible.

Two other Cupp projects, both specifically concerned with community involvement and community regeneration illustrate different approaches to partnership working and empowerment and how these can impact in different ways on improvements to local areas. The Moulsecoomb 'Being Heard' project involved academic researchers from the Social Sciences, students from the Institute of Development Studies and residents of East Brighton in researching some of the possibilities of and constraints to community involvement. The CNA (Community Needs Analysis) in West Hove brought together academics and students from the Centre for Computing, Maths and Information Sciences with volunteers to look at priorities for local development among community members.

The main objectives of the Being Heard project was to compare different types of resident involvement in Moulsecoomb; involvement in a large scale state funded project and involvement in smaller community led activities. It had two main goals, – that of enabling residents views to be heard and influencing policy making at a local and national level. The report concluded that the potential for resident participation is high but draws attention to the difficulties of using participatory approaches and the "differences in status, attitude and approach between residents and officers along with an imbalance in value attached to different types of knowledge" (Conyers and MacDonald 2008). It also examined the problem of community representation:

…… the study raises concerns regarding the number and type of people who participate. The findings suggest that the number of residents who get involved in area improvement activities in Moulsecoomb is small and that there is a 'hard core' of participants who are involved in several different activities. They also suggest that the scope for increasing the level of participation is limited because the majority of the population are, for a variety of reasons, either unable or unwilling to play an active role. Both residents and other stakeholders suggested that there are particular characteristics of Moulsecoomb that have discouraged widespread participation, notably its physical and social fragmentation ….research elsewhere suggests that the low level of involvement in Moulsecoomb is not unusual…….. The

study also found that the majority of participants are ‘self-selected’ and that they are often not typical of the wider community. This raises important questions of representation: are those who do participate regarded as representatives of the wider community and, if so, how effective can they be in this role? (Conyers and MacDonald, 2008:33)

The purpose of the CNA project was to assess the needs and perceptions of a different area of Brighton as articulated by local residents. It used a questionnaire with open and closed questions but analysed these by counting the number of votes to establish resident priorities for development. The report focussed on gathering and tabulating data that could then be taken forward by local community members to lobby for infrastructural change. The report consists of a series of statistical tables quantifying the changes that residents would like to take place. The recommendations in the report point to separate outcomes for academics and community partners:

This report is intended for use as a working document that can inform the development and improvement of services, provide information for community groups and evidence funding bids.

In addition, the results will be disseminated to local residents‟ homes via the West Hove News, at local community venues, shops and cafes and will be available to download from the West Hove Communities website. The CNA team also writes academic papers and articles discussing participatory design, social capital, collaborative working and involving methods and will continue to use information and communications technology as a tool to support local community networks. (Community Needs Analysis, Full report, CNA Research Team, February 2008 Cupp Website)

The CNA research deals with the collection of quantitative statistical data, which was largely gathered by students on behalf of organisations and as such could be handed over to those organisations to use. It illustrates the potential value of empirical data to evidence funding bid and is a useful example of how the separate knowledge bases of students, studying information science, and residents, familiar with a particular area, can contribute to community improvement. It was not necessary for the community to be involved in all stages of the research in order for

it still to be useful to them.

However the Being Heard was concerned with the much less tangible processes of how individuals and communities make their voices understood. As such it was important that both university and community researchers were part of the research process. Their evaluation of that process illustrates some of the difficulties associated with community representation.

BoingBoing is a mature Cupp programme with its origins in a joint practitioner-academic book published in 2007 (Hart et al 2007) A further strand of the work developed as a result of a Helpdesk Enquiry from a local parenting charity which was responded to by an academic (Aumann and Hart 2009). BoingBoing draws together ideas from work on the nature of resilience to support disadvantaged children and their families. It offers training and one to one support to practitioners. Within the university, it feeds into curriculum developments and involves students through individual research projects and volunteering opportunities. Undertaking research in the resilience field and supporting parents, practitioners and disadvantaged young people to engage in, and with, resilience research are further elements of the programme. Two examples serve to illustrate this. First, a resilience research forum with equal participation from community partners takes place three times a year. Second, BoingBoing's recent delegation to deliver a workshop at a Canadian Resilience Conference consisted of two academics and five practitioners. Most recently BoingBoing has developed its own website and social enterprise jointly owned and managed by a community partner and an academic. From inception, it has been participatory, with the original idea for the book coming jointly from community partners and a scholar. The fruits of funding bids have been shared, with more monies funding community partner and parent input than academic. A community organisation has held and managed the budget for a number of projects, although final says on who gets funded for what have been joint decisions. Any ideas for funding bids are jointly developed, and would simply not be pursued if community partners could not fully endorse them. Of course the development of BoingBoing has not been without its tensions, with issues of finances, power and the need to work at developing mutual goals, important points of tension that have been elaborated elsewhere in joint articles by an academic and her community partner (Hart and Aumann 2007; Aumann and Hart in press) One of the key reasons that BoingBoing has developed in such a participatory way is that the lead academic is a 'boundary spanner', at once an academic, community practitioner in the field of child and adolescent mental health, and also a service

user in her capacity as adoptive parent of three children with special needs. Boundary spanners can be useful in situations where people speak very different languages and come from different power bases. They can help translate across contexts, and draw networks together.

The nature of partnership working depends a lot on individuals being able to act as ‘boundary spanners’ representing and bringing together the needs of different groups or different sectors, working for similar ends. A further example of a project in which boundary spanning might have supported the development of mature participatory research partnerships is Count Me In Too. Count Me In Too is an award-winning research project where lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people shared their views and experiences, and worked with service providers and others to gather and present evidence that would promote positive changes for LGBT people. It was based on an earlier research project, Count me In, designed entirely by community members and funded by the East Sussex Health Authority and Brighton & Hove Regeneration Partnership programme. Drawing on the findings of this research, a LGBT community strategy was created with key demands for improving the lives of LGBT people in Brighton & Hove. Many action points were directed at the creation and provision of services. From Count Me In ‘Spectrum’, a local advocacy group, was formed, in part to hold mainstream services accountable to LGBT communities.

By 2005 the LGBT community strategy was nearing its end and there was a demand for further up to date evidence, with which to inform future work. Through a CUPP-Trustee matching event at the University of Brighton Spectrum was able to make links with a Brighton based academic and their joint working has framed much of the work of Count me in Too. A series of open consultations were instigated and a steering group formed, which guided the design of the research and stakeholders were asked to submit questions for the questionnaire. Data was collected through the questionnaire and supplemented with focus group discussions. An LGBT data analysis group analysed the results and key stakeholders were involved in commissioning additional related research which included Domestic Violence, Community Safety, Drugs and Alcohol and Mental health.

The Count Me In Too website describes the research as ‘a community led project from the start’. Count Me In Too’s lead academic was well networked with existing contacts in Brighton and Hove’s LGBT community, as well as a strong research profile in this area, and was able to play a boundary spanning role alongside Spectrum which had ongoing working relationships with local LGBT activists and

organisations. The research was designed and directed by a research team made up of academic researchers and paid staff and volunteers from Spectrum, as the project's community partner. The project engaged community members in project design, data gathering and analysis, and thus in terms of a global knowledge movement it is probably the best example of community members themselves using research process and findings to pursue their own ends. However it also highlights issues about paid and volunteered time and the amount of gift time needed in community owned projects if members are to be fully engaged in research processes.[1]

Helpdesk enquiries often develop into commissioned research – either paid or unpaid depending on the circumstances. Here, academics from the university take on a research project, the aims and objectives of which are clearly developed by a community organisation in collaboration with academics. An evaluation of a mentoring service for people with mental health difficulties attempting to find work is an example of this type of commission (Cameron et al., in press). In this project, two academics worked to the brief of the community organisation, interviewing staff and service users. The project resulted in the academics providing the organisation with an evaluation report.

A Brighton based visiting professor has worked extensively with London Citizens, a group campaigning on a wider range of issues including affordable housing in London. Free of some of the demands of school based professors, he has been able to direct his research to match the needs of the group, which they have similarly been able to use to influence policy. While he took responsibility for leading on research processes the group took an active part in directing these and, as commissioners, were ready and able to use the knowledge generated to support their campaign.

Masters' Students, who take on projects on behalf of community groups, fall very much into this role of commissioned researchers. Although unpaid they are invariably working to specifications provided by a community group while taking responsibility themselves for the research process. Generally a student will frame the research questions in response to a brief set by a community partner then collect data, analyse findings and produce a research report themselves. They depend on their partner to provide them with access to community respondents and to data sources rarely have the flexibility to work equally with their partner throughout the research process. Deadlines provided by academic timetables and requirements set by examination boards frame the kind of report they eventually

produce and for a partnership to succeed these parameters need to be acceptable to both parties. Some will agree to prepare a separate report to the community group in addition to their academic thesis. An Occupational Therapy student who worked with a group of marginalised community artists was able to identify data to support a large funding application while gaining valuable experience of with a particular client group and access to a hard to reach community. The success of her research depended on her being able to manage the research and take the lead in collecting and analysing data, without which the work may not have been completed. Her partner organisation were happy to provide her with occasional advice and were grateful for her findings but would not have had the time to work equally on the research with her.

Student community research partnerships and academic commissions have also thrown up the different intentions that universities and communities have for research projects. While a university may continue to look for an unbiased analysis of findings and a critical appraisal, community groups attach their own meanings to their activities and are often looking for a positive spin on these to present to future funders. This became apparent during a former student project with a local drop in centre. Although the students were closely supervised by module tutors they were encouraged to analyse their findings and to identify recommendations for future developments. As an academic piece of work they gained a high grade for the rigour with which they approached the project but their partners were horrified by what they read as implied criticism making the results unusable in future funding applications. Such an outcome is not uncommon in commissioned research where the organisation requesting the work expects to be portrayed positively in its findings.

Conclusion

None of the above examples necessarily invalidate or undermine the success of the projects cited but they do illustrate how important it is to be honest about what they are able to achieve in terms of community empowerment and social change. They also illustrate some of the difficulties in research partnerships and how hard it is for minority groups to properly own and take forward the knowledge they have helped to generate. Cupp aims at the co-ownership, with community partners, of the processes through which knowledge is developed and the ways in which it is subsequently used. While we have achieved this in some of our mature partnership other projects are still very much at the beginning of this process. Our history of

collaborative working shows members of a partnership moving in and out of positions from which they are able to challenge dominant ideologies and take control at different stages in the relationship. Over time we have seen community groups beginning to influence the academy both in the delivery of teaching and the commissioning and of research.

But Cupp projects also illustrate some of the difficulties of using participatory approaches within an academic context and of the separate pressures and tensions on academics and on practitioners that pull them towards different priorities. Freire's belief in the ability of minority groups to 'name their world' and then to organise to transform it is countered by the realisation of how hard it is in the present climate for many such groups merely to cope and to stay alive. The energy needed to live with multiple disabilities, to feed a family from a minimum income, to cope with homelessness or a serious addiction or to negotiate civil responsibilities in a second language as a refugee, invariably makes it difficult for partners to also actively participate in research to change their lives. In this instance it remains the responsibility of academics to advocate on behalf of the partners with whom they work. The Freireian philosophy of the importance of oppressed people owning and naming their world is an important reminder of the purpose of our work and of the difficulties of the context in which people live.

If the great popular masses are without a more critical understanding of how society functions, it is not because they are naturally incapable of it…but on account of precarious conditions in which they live and survive, where they are 'forbidden to know'. Thus, the way out is…the critical effort through which men and women take themselves in hand and become agents of curiosity, become investigators, become subjects in an ongoing process of quest for the revelation of the 'why' of things and 'facts'. (Freire 1999:105)

In order to support people in gaining a more critical understanding of how society functions it may be necessary to work with them and to help provide the 'why' of things and 'facts'. While people themselves may lack neither the curiosity nor the potential to do this the time needed for full engagement in research is often at a premium.

In 2009, ten years on from the 1999 World Declaration, UNESCO held a series of follow-up conferences focussing on two overarching themes: the role for higher

education in addressing major global challenges (sustainable development, Education for All, poverty eradication), and their ongoing social responsibility. The conference ended with the following conclusion:

The past decade provides evidence that higher education and research contribute to the eradication of poverty, to sustainable development and to progress towards reaching the internationally agreed upon development goals, which include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). The global education agenda should reflect these realities.

In 2010 the president of the International Association of Universities made the following statement:

What has become clear is that none of these major issues in the global agenda will be resolved without the participation of universities, since they are the environments that foster not only knowledge, thought and research but also proposals for social action. (Ramon de la Fuente, president of the International Association of Universities. 2010)

Certainly the stage has been set, both nationally and internationally for universities to redefine their approach to knowledge creation and their role in relation to their local communities. Such a role will include working for, working on behalf of and working with local communities as they generate the knowledge that will help them to understand their world, and subsequently to change it. Universities have a responsibility to develop in their staff and their students an appreciation of different forms of knowledge and the ability to use these to address issues of sustainability, disadvantage and inequality. The Cupp story is a modest one but its history holds some useful lessons for community university partnerships and indicates something of what they might contribute to this process.

Table 1: Gaventa's Research model

Stages of Research	Researcher Led (traditional)	Practitioner led (Participatory)	Collaborative

Identification of research problem of question	Researcher	Community	Joint
Development of method/approach	Researcher	Community with research assistance	Joint
Entering the community	Researcher	Researcher invited by the community	Negotiation process
Gathering the data	Researcher	Community	Joint
Analysis of Data	Researcher	Community members with help of researcher	Joint
Dissemination/follow up	Researcher	Primarily for learning and action in the community	For community empowerment and or outside use/publication
Exiting the community	Researcher	Transfer of skills	Negotiated process

Source: lecture notes, John Gaventa, 2007

Table 2. Revised research model/time line showing different levels of community control at different points in the research process.

	Idea	**Question**	Methods	Data collection	Analysis	Writing up	Used by
Particip.	Community	Community with researcher	Community with researcher	Often community	Community with researcher	Community with researcher	Community for social change
Comm.	Community	Researcher	Researcher	Researcher, possible community assistants	Researcher	Researcher	Community often for funding purposes
Collab.	Joint	Joint	Researcher	Researcher, possible community assistants	Joint	Researcher	Researcher

Supported	Community	Community with academic support	Researcher with community agreement	Community	Joint	Community with academic support	Community often for development purposes
Trad.	Researcher	Researcher	Researcher	Researcher possibly with community gatekeepers	Researcher	Researcher	Researcher or academic institution.

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Notes

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