



# Common Cause Research

Building Research Collaborations  
between Universities and Black  
and Minority Ethnic communities





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Any errors or omissions in the report, however, remain our own.

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# Foreword

“  
If we see universities as  
places that create futures  
through their research, teaching,  
and development of leaders,  
thinkers and policy makers in  
every area of human endeavour,  
then this report is pretty  
essential reading.  
”

This report is a very welcome piece of work. In the current political and societal context – in which questions of identity are being mixed with sometimes frightening questions about the role of older institutions versus more radical social movements – it asks what the purpose and relevance is of universities in relation to their communities. But the report does more than ask questions. It also qualifies as an excuse remover; a qualification that I generally do not bestow lightly on works of this nature.

**I**n describing how things are today, this report admirably helps readers to orientate themselves and their organisations to the changing relationships between the worlds of culture, community and academia. More importantly – and essential to serving as an excuse remover – it offers solutions and frameworks for how we might move forward. It identifies a set of tests by which universities, funders and other national leaders might assess the relevance and progress of their strategies in relation to their role in the cultural and community space.

My attitude to universities has changed since becoming the Chancellor of the University of Lincoln and visiting Professor there. I have had the privilege of observing how universities can take up (or revisit) their role as (what Peter Senge calls) system leaders, within the communities that they are part of and which they exist to serve.

If they are to take the report's recommendations seriously (as I believe they should) then the art of collaboration will need to be a key skill developed within universities today. This is no easy task in an era of increasing competition for what seems like dwindling resource. However, where resources are scarce collaboration is the best use of them. In particular, collaboration is essential, as this report demonstrates, if society is to benefit from the expertise and knowledge of all its communities.

Recent critiques of universities suggest that they are caught in the restless dialogue between the existing power and resources of older institutions and their diminishing relevance in the eyes of some social movements. In this context, universities have to re-engage with their purpose locally and nationally. This report provides a lens through which universities might start to re-engage with that purpose.

If we see universities as places that create futures through their research, teaching, and development of leaders, thinkers and policy makers in every area of human endeavour, then this report is pretty essential reading.

Excuse removers do not come around very often in my experience. Universities are in the privileged position of being able to ask hard questions and to think on society's behalf in challenging times and so they also have a responsibility to ask questions of themselves and to take up the challenges in the following pages. No excuses.

Lord Victor Adebowale CBE, MA  
Chair Collaborate CIC  
Visiting Professor and Chancellor University of Lincoln

\*  
In terms of race equality,  
the difficulties of building  
partnerships between universities  
and Black and Minority Ethnic  
communities is a matter  
of serious concern.

\*

# Executive summary

Today, universities are increasingly being encouraged to develop collaborations with partners beyond their walls. This move towards partnership is to be welcomed as a means of enriching the quality of research and scholarship and of bringing wider social benefits. In the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, in particular, the development of collaborations between universities and communities offers the potential to open up new areas for inquiry as well as new possibilities for creative invention and social action.

Recent research suggests, however, that organisations and individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic communities may be under-represented in these partnerships, and that where such partnerships are formed the experiences are not always productive or conducive to drawing on the knowledge and expertise of all participants. In terms of race equality, this is a matter of serious concern.

BME community and arts groups put up with the difficulties of engaging with universities in the hope that they and their work will be acknowledged and affirmed, validated and endorsed. Some wrongly view universities as independent adjudicators able to offer credibility in a hostile environment. But all want their contribution to a fair and just society to be recorded and their experience used as the basis for new behaviours and practice and to enrich public understanding.

**T**his report aims to address this issue. It documents the barriers and enablers to building collaborative research partnerships between universities and artists, civil society, educational and cultural organisations from Black and Minority Ethnic communities. The report is based on:

- 19 detailed case studies of existing collaborative partnerships between these groups, exploring what it took to build and sustain relationships.
- Six workshops held across the UK with 89 participants.
- A roundtable with research funders and higher education leadership organisations.
- An online search of publicly available data from major funders of research and community-university collaborations.

We are aware that there are limits in drawing generalisations from this sample. However, the findings that we report here are consistent within this sample, and they echo findings from the very limited wider research in this field. Importantly, this is the first study of research collaborations and we hope that it will open up debate about the question of race equality in the research landscape to complement the already existing discussions relation to race in the fields of widening participation and curriculum in higher education.

To begin, it is worth explaining why it is so important to understand how to enable these partnerships to develop. When successful, these partnerships produce a wide range of important legacies including: products and material outputs; capacity building and personal development; networks and relationships; new ideas and concepts; changed institutions; and influences on the wider research landscape. These 19 projects between them have impacted on government policy in areas ranging from culture and media to local government, have generated internationally recognised contributions to scholarship, have supported the creation of new artworks, and have produced powerful new archives of previously unrecorded histories. As a whole their contributions include:

- Enriching and correcting the knowledge landscape by ensuring that new knowledge and archives are produced.
- Providing important educational contributions to public history and knowledge, to participants and to policy audiences.
- Changing the university by building trust between communities and universities and creating opportunities for members of BME communities to teach, research and engage in formal training.

What is notable, however, is that these collaborations emerge despite a number of profound structural obstacles, namely:

- The perception and reality of universities as white majority institutions lacking openness to ideas and expertise from outside the institution.
- The fact that research partnerships tend to emerge from existing social and institutional networks which exclude communities without strong social and cultural links into or paths to access individuals within universities.
- The lack of investment in large infrastructure organisations in the UK to support and represent BME communities' arts, cultural and humanities interests, meaning that there are relatively few organisations able to initiate and develop long term sustained partnerships.
- The limited capacity of small resource-rich but cash-strapped cultural and community organisations to get involved in developing research proposals, compounded by conditions of economic austerity.
- The negative longer-term impact of previous extractive research on Black and Minority Ethnic communities that has led to mistrust in some sectors towards any form of partnership with universities.

More positively, we are also seeing:

- The growing confidence in some community organisations in developing ground rules and clear expectations for research partnerships that allow them to develop realistic timescales and financial agreements that benefit communities and hold external partners accountable for their behaviour and actions.

Building collaborative research projects involves, in the first instance, the development of connections and contacts between academics and community members. There are a number of factors that militate against individuals and organisations from some Black and Minority Ethnic communities making these connections:

- Universities rarely have open and transparent advice on how to make connections and build research partnerships.
- There are low levels of Black and Minority Ethnic academic staff in UK universities, particularly at senior level and in research-intensive universities, meaning that universities are not seen as representing or welcoming to all communities and making it harder for informal networks to emerge.
- Experiences of racism and stereotyping of BME communities by universities impede the development of trust and early conversations when initial conversations are established.
- There is an uneven level of cultural competency amongst white academics.
- Attempts to build new partnerships between universities and BME communities can be characterised by tokenism and a fetishization of ethnicity.
- The development of partnerships too often becomes the sole responsibility of visible minority academic staff members.

Despite this, it is notable that some groups have succeeded in building powerful social and academic capital that enables them to access universities in different ways. However, where this was successful, these projects were usually short-term and were far from sustainably embedded in the university structures and operational culture/systems.

What was also notable was the significant negative impact on developing trusted relationships played by:

- Alienating institutional spaces in which communities were made to feel unwelcome.
- Home Office border control requirements which created hostility and mistrust between communities and universities.
- Inappropriate university ethics procedures that caused mistrust and suspicion and exploited the university's greater legal and economic resources.

Projects do, however, get off the ground despite these obstacles and successfully manage to create powerful research collaborations that are based on trusting relationships. Where projects have created trusted spaces for dialogue they have employed some or all of the following approaches:

- They have worked with trusted mediators and brokers.
- They have operated with mutual respect for diverse sets of expertise and under principles of co-production of knowledge.
- They have enabled mediators and brokers to inform project teams about how best to collaborate with different communities, and built the project practices (including finance and practical arrangements) around this advice.
- They have created welcoming spaces for informal dialogue and addressed the issues that might prevent people from being able or comfortable to enter them, including considering remaining off university grounds.
- They have enabled explicit discussion about historical exploitative practices that persist based on stereotypes or prejudices and the limits of current institutional practices to address these.
- University partners have found ways of explaining, distancing themselves from and working around the requirements to act as Home Office border police.
- Project teams have developed robust ethical procedures that are relevant to and sensitive to the experiences and interests of the partners that they are working with.
- Project teams have explored various funding options, including ways that the community partner may submit applications to applicable research funders.
- Project teams have a clear understanding of the personal and institutional aims and goals of all involved.

Central to successful projects is the identification of mutual interests and the creation of common ground. There is no simple recipe for the process of finding and identifying common ground and shared interests, but a number of factors seem to contribute:

- Time for individuals to get to know each other informally.
- Time and receptiveness for ideas to emerge organically.
- Capacity to manage conflict – internally and externally.
- Partners with a clear understanding of their own interests and expertise and the ability to see where these connect with others' interests and expertise.
- Bid development processes with sufficient time to enable partners to really explore mutual interests and space to work through how best to navigate funding processes.
- Experience of working together on other projects and activities.
- Common backgrounds and shared experiences.
- Brokers able to facilitate dialogue and create networks and encounters.



**When successful, partnerships produce a wide range of important legacies including: products and material outputs; capacity building and personal development; networks and relationships; new ideas and concepts; changed institutions; and influences on the wider research landscape.**



Funding – how it is distributed, applied for, planned and announced – plays a critical role in the development of these partnerships. A number of important factors impact the opportunities for individuals and organisations from Black and Minority Ethnic communities to access resource for research activities; namely:

- Structural inequalities are embedded early on in the funding process, specialist centres of expertise and knowledge relating to funding and how to access it, privilege those in white majority universities.
- Short notice funding calls privilege those with existing networks and expertise who are able to rapidly turn around proposals.
- The specialised language required in funding processes can work against productive collaborations unless efforts are made to ensure transparency in the bid development process.
- The availability of local funding officers able to translate ‘funder speak’ on the ground is useful for demystifying funding processes and supporting access to funding.
- Long term relationships and networks between universities and community organisations can help to mitigate some of the structural inequalities in funding processes.
- Where community partners are not able to include overhead and staffing costs in projects, they are deterred from participating as this impacts their long-term viability.
- Where the day-to-day practical costs of building relationships with communities with limited experience or trust in the research process cannot be included in funding (e.g. travel, hospitality, welcoming activities) this deters participation and/or requires university staff or community groups to pick up these costs themselves, again a significant deterrent.
- There is the perception of racial bias in funding allocations and self-censorship in bid development amongst some funding applicants from BME communities.
- There is under-investment in large scale, Black-led awards which means that sustainable institutional and infrastructural capacity is not being built.
- The demand for ‘representative’ research and ‘diversity’ – i.e. the demand to represent more than one community – works against individuals, cultural organisations and community organisations seeking to understand and address the interests and cultural heritage of specific communities.
- BME individuals and groups report being asked to take on additional roles as advocates, leaders and advisors on behalf of funders, with no financial recompense and at significant cost to their time, without funders making significant equivalent investment in their own processes to address these issues.

Once funded, there are a number of factors that inform the development of successful partnerships, these include:

- Project teams that create conditions for open dialogue and mutual respect.
- Project teams that address historical and social barriers that contribute to structural discrimination.
- Clear communication and a commitment to building robust relationships.
- Recognition of expertise and a commitment to listening and learning.
- Having difficult conversations to address emerging issues, including challenging stereotypes, confronting biases and addressing racist and discriminatory practices.
- Using appropriate methods to build trust with community partners.
- Working in multiple languages where appropriate.
- Using creative and arts-based methods to actively engage different forms of knowledge and facilitate different forms of communication.
- Managing time flexibly and responsively to different participants needs and commitments.

Both community partners and university staff, however, report that university systems are often a significant impediment to the development of productive relationships. These impediments include:

- The systematic failure of universities as large organisations to pay small community organisations in a timely manner, leading a number to face significant personal and organisational financial difficulties.
- The lack of availability of named and accessible individuals in universities to contact to discuss any issues relating to finance, legal and other contractual matters.
- The lack of flexibility of university finance systems to deal with the day-to-day practicalities of collaborative projects, including the need for small sums of petty cash to address issues such as payment for travel or subsistence, without the need for collaborators to complete lengthy and often inaccessible forms.
- The burden of contracts, legal and HR processes which serve to alienate community partners seeking to build a collaboration. Many of the contracts required by universities were overly long, rarely relevant to the nature of the smaller scale collaboration concerned and required significant legal expertise to decipher.
- The ethical forms and processes of the university act as an impediment to collaboration and failed, in many cases, to fulfil the actual lived ethical obligations expected between the collaborating partners.

Notably, some of the bureaucratic challenges may be seen not as ubiquitous bureaucracy, but as targeted attempts to alienate certain community organisations from participating within university systems.

There are a number of challenges to developing longer-term and more widespread legacies from these projects:

- The issue of ownership, archiving and longer-term sustainability of outputs is not always addressed in project planning, leaving archives and knowledge vulnerable to loss and undermining the capacity to build more substantial insights across multiple projects and activities.
- Short-term funding can leave negative legacies for the ongoing economic sustainability of small community organisations and can undermine trust between universities and communities.
- The lack of commitment to longer-term collaboration also militates against the development of partnerships that can effect serious policy changes over time and against the collaborative writing that would ensure that the academic knowledge base reflects the knowledge produced in the research.

It is worth noting, however, that the current short-term funding model does not have to be the only model for supporting these collaborations:

- Universities are able to develop longer-term commitments and partnerships should they desire through their use of block research funding, although we see very little evidence of this in the Arts, Humanities and Social Science arenas.
- Funders are able to shape funding to enable the same resource to be allocated over the longer-term, and to offer follow-on calls to enable existing partnerships to be sustained; too often follow-on calls expect 'scaling up' rather than deepening and development of what may be early stage relationships that require continuing support.

In the light of these findings, we propose a series of recommendations for universities, university staff, community and civil society organisations and funding bodies. These are detailed in full in the recommendations section at the end of this report and we encourage institutions and individuals to consider these at greater length. At the heart of these recommendations is a core tenet that:

**Collaboration depends initially on an active engagement and desire to create an equitable and respectful space in which people are willing to come together, understand and engage with each other's distinctive knowledge and experience, and explore opportunities and barriers to mutually beneficial outcomes. Once this has been achieved, partners must work together to build trust and to explore where common ground and mutual interests might be developed.**

In addition, inspired by Fair Trade principles that offer a useful precedent for reframing the relationship between large organisations and smaller partners, we propose an overarching set of 'Fair and Mutual Research Principles'. We propose that these should be adopted by universities and used to inform decision-making around the suitability of universities to receive funding.

These principles will be of particular benefit in addressing issues of race equality in relation to university-community partnerships but will also be of wider benefit in relation to other communities and partners.

The ten principles of fair and mutual research partnerships comprise:

- 1 — A commitment to strengthening the partnering community organisation.
- 2 — A commitment to mutual benefit.
- 3 — A commitment to transparency and accountability.
- 4 — Fair practices in payments.
- 5 — Fair payments for participants.
- 6 — A commitment to fair knowledge exchange.
- 7 — A commitment to sustainability and legacy.
- 8 — A commitment to equality and diversity.
- 9 — A commitment to sectoral as well as organisational development.
- 10 — A commitment to reciprocal learning.

There is important and urgent action that needs to be taken to fulfil these principles, in particular by funders and by university leaders.

These principles and recommendations will make a major contribution to building robust and mutually beneficial research collaborations and to strengthening the long-term capacity of Black and Minority Ethnic communities and organisations to build powerful knowledge today and into the future.

Alongside the necessary work to address structural inequalities in other areas – such as widening participation and decolonising the curriculum – we hope that the proposals we make here will begin to transform universities into powerful spaces for mutual learning, dialogue and the enrichment of our collective knowledge base.



**Collaboration depends on an active engagement and willingness to create an equitable and respectful space in which people are willing to come together, understand and engage with each other's distinctive knowledge and experience, and explore opportunities and barriers to mutually beneficial outcomes.**



Within this document  
we have used a number  
of abbreviations.  
This glossary provides  
a summary of  
what these mean.

# Glossary

### AHRC

Arts and Humanities Research Council.

### Co-Produced Research

Research designed and conducted by a university and an external partner where both partners are involved in all stages of the process.

### ECU

Equality Challenge Unit.

### ESRC

Economic and Social Research Council.

### EPSRC

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

### FEC

Full Economic Costing.

A method for estimating the cost of research to a higher education institution, it is used to develop funding bids.

### HEFCE

Higher Education Funding Council for England.  
[www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk)

### HEI

Higher Education Institution.

### HEIF

Higher Education Innovation Funding.

Funding to support knowledge exchange in universities allocated by HEFCE.

### Impact Acceleration Funding

Funding available to research institutions to improve knowledge exchange, impact and engagement with organisations outside of the institution.

### KEF

Knowledge Exchange Framework.

A system currently under development to measure the contribution of higher education institutions to the economy and society.

### KPI

Key Performance Indicator.

Measurable value that demonstrates how effectively key objectives are being met.

### NCCPE

National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement.  
[www.publicengagement.ac.uk](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk)

### NERC

Natural Environment Research Council.

### NGO

Non-Governmental Organisation.

### OfS

Office for Students.

[www.officeforstudents.org.uk](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk)

### Principal Investigator (PI)

### Co-Investigator (Co-I)

Positions in a research project. Those who carry out these roles are usually named in the funding bid. The Principal Investigator is considered to be responsible for the project from a financial/administrative perspective.

### REF

Research Excellence Framework.

The system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions carried out by the higher education funding bodies.

### TEF

Teaching Excellence Framework.

The system for assessing the quality of teaching in UK higher education institutions carried out by the Office for Students.

### UKRI

UK Research and Innovation.

A new body that oversees research in the UK bringing together the seven research councils with Innovate UK and Research England

### Intellectual Property

This is something that an individual creates and to which they own the rights of use and reuse – it can be ideas, concepts, artworks, inventions or other similar things. Where multiple partners create something together they may share the rights to use that work.

### Sandpit

A residential workshop run by a funder to bring together stakeholders who may want to develop research projects together.

**1**

# Introduction

Today, universities are increasingly being encouraged to develop collaborations with partners beyond their walls – from industry to civil society, from local government to the creative and cultural sectors – with the aim of developing new knowledge as well as products and services that have real social, cultural and economic benefits. Reciprocally, community, local government and industry are looking to universities for expertise and partnerships that can help them address urgent contemporary challenges.

**T**his move towards partnership is to be welcomed as a means of enriching the quality of research and of bringing wider social benefits. In the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, in particular, the development of collaborations between universities and communities previously marginalised from university research offers the potential to open up new areas for inquiry and new possibilities for creative invention and social action. These sorts of engagements and knowledge sharing can bring the university into a much closer relationship with communities; producing a reduction in barriers to knowledge production and decision-making inside and outside of the academy.

What is becoming clear, however, is that this move toward what is variously described as ‘co-produced’ research, ‘knowledge exchange’, ‘public engagement’ or ‘impact enhancement’ also risks intensifying existing inequalities. A recent study of over 300 projects funded as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council Connected Communities programme,<sup>1</sup> for example, identified a number of factors that militate against the democratising and inclusive impetus of the drive towards co-production.

This report showed that research partnerships tend to be built through informal social connections, privileging those groups and networks already connected with universities. It also demonstrated that research partnerships tend to be built around the identification of common interests between university and community partners, requiring a degree of shared interest or common culture.

As a consequence of these factors, it is unsurprising that the same study found that 50% of the community partners in these projects were already well networked in to academic research – having previously worked in or with universities. The report also noted, in particular, that Black and Minority Ethnic communities were poorly represented in these partnerships and that when partnerships were built, they were not necessarily positive and productive experiences for BME partners.

In terms of race equality, this is a matter of serious concern. As part of a larger battle against discrimination and inequality, these findings suggest that something critical is needed in order to change – and challenge – existing patterns of interaction, recruitment, funding and engagement. At present, the UK research landscape does not reflect the views, experiences, cultures, interests and needs of the UK population as a whole. This needs to change.

<sup>1</sup> Facer, K. and Enright, B. (2016) *Creating Living Knowledge*. Bristol: AHRC Connected Communities/ Bristol University. [https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final\\_.pdf](https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final_.pdf)

We acknowledge that these concerns exist within a wider set of structural inequalities relating to race and the research landscape, namely that:

- The staff base of the university sector poorly reflects the ethnic and cultural make-up of the UK population.<sup>2</sup>
- Research funding is clustered in universities with the lowest levels of Black and Minority Ethnic participation amongst both staff and students.
- Black and Minority Ethnic community organisations are currently facing significant and intensifying economic challenges making it hard to create time to build partnerships with universities and conduct research.
- There are few 'infrastructure' organisations working in and for BME communities that offer the strength and longevity to more easily facilitate long-term partnership building.
- The political climate towards BME communities, whether they are migrants or residents (note the Windrush debacle) is hostile and has been for generations, a hostility that is under-recognised in partnerships.
- The debate and knowledge relating to diversity and exclusion fails to make progress as the body of data generated from previous research and interventions over the years is poorly connected.

What this means, therefore, is that without intentional cross-sector effort to build partnerships between universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities, we run the risk of perpetuating inequalities, sustaining barriers to cooperation and inclusion and ignoring (or limiting) the expertise of all the UK's communities. We must do more to ensure that our universities serve the needs and interests of Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

While acknowledging these long-term structural inequalities, the aims of this report are: first, to understand the barriers and enablers to building new research partnerships; and second, to identify a set of recommendations that will increase the chance of realising this potential.

The report arises from the 'Common Cause Research' project established in 2016 by a consortium of academics and civil society actors working with the University of Bristol, University of Liverpool, University of Nottingham, Runnymede Trust and Xtend Consulting. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council<sup>3</sup> and by the Arts Council, the project has three aims:

- To better understand the present state of collaborations between universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the field of the Arts and Humanities;
- To engage new communities and networks in this debate — demystifying the processes of research collaboration and building new bridges between sectors and actors; and
- To outline future trajectories to strengthen the university-community networks sustaining such collaborations.

2

Alexander, C. and Arday, J. (eds.) (2015) *Aiming Higher: Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy*. London: Runnymede Trust. <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/Aiming%20Higher.pdf>

3

AHRC funding was provided through the Connected Communities Leadership Fellowship (PI Keri Facer, Grant number: AH/N504518/1 – <https://connected-communities.org/>) and Translating Cultures Leadership Fellowship (PI Charles Forsdick, Grant Number: AH/N504476/1 – <http://translatingcultures.org.uk/>).

This report is based on 20 months of workshops, interviews, films, analysis of funders' datasets and case studies through which the project team have produced the first picture of collaborations between Black and Minority Ethnic communities and universities in the UK.<sup>4</sup>

In this report we discuss the difficulties that impede the creation of collaborations between universities and organisations, artists, activists and scholars from Black and Minority Ethnic communities; the significant benefits of those partnerships once they are developed; and what it might take to extend and strengthen these partnerships in future. We conclude with a set of recommendations for universities, funders, national bodies and civil society groups.

<sup>4</sup>  
See Appendix 1 for full methodology.



**Without intentional cross-sector effort to build partnerships between universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities, we run the risk of perpetuating inequalities, sustaining barriers to cooperation and inclusion and ignoring (or limiting) the expertise of all the UK's communities. We must do more to ensure that our universities serve the needs and interests of Black and Minority Ethnic communities.**



## A brief note on terminology

There are three sets of contested terminology in this project: The first is concerned with definitions of race and ethnicity. We have chosen to work with the admittedly contentious term 'Black and Minority Ethnic' to describe the communities and community partners whose partnership with universities we are particularly interested in understanding. We are aware that in taking this decision, we risk conflating very different experiences and social outcomes as well as privileging certain minorities over others. But we also recognise that as a term it provides a relatively commonly accepted way of describing groups of individuals who experience discrimination based on their minority ethnic backgrounds, and that this term is the foundation for much of the public and policy discussion of race equality in the UK – even though some of these groups are the majority population in other parts of the world.

The second set of contested terminology is concerned with the idea of the 'Arts and Humanities'. This umbrella term captures radically diverse research practices – from legal studies to urban design, from philosophy and history to community arts. Our attention to this area of university research collaborations is a matter of both principle and expediency. Our position is that the Arts and Humanities, in particular, needs to be concerned with questions of whose voices, experiences and cultures are reflected in the research process for the simple reason that a robust knowledge base in these fields cannot be produced without the accounts and experiences of all the UK's diverse communities. It is also the Arts and Humanities Research Council that has been active in supporting work in this area and that is beginning to make steps – through programmes such as Connected Communities – to develop new approaches to research funding.

The third set of complex terminology relates to the nature of 'community partners' who are forming partnerships with universities on whom we have chosen to focus. Our attention is focused, in particular, on those community, civil society and arts organisations who either originate within Black and Minority Ethnic communities themselves, or who are committed to working and co-producing their research and other work in active partnership with these communities. We do not have the resources in this report, unfortunately, to report on the experiences of grassroots communities who often act as volunteers and participants in these projects. We recognise, in some instances, that lines are blurred between community interest groups, collectives and others who may participate, volunteer and actively organise on behalf of their community in ways that may be hard to quantify or track.

There are, therefore, absences in this report that need to be acknowledged before we start and exclusions that need to be addressed in future research. More needs to be known about partnerships in the Medical Sciences, Sciences and Social Sciences and how these might differ from the Arts and Humanities. More needs to be known about the experiences of white minority ethnic communities, Roma and traveler communities, and communities that experience exclusion on the grounds of religion, culture and lifestyle. More needs to be known about the experiences of grassroots participants in projects. We recognise these absences and encourage others to see them as starting points and prompts to further inquiry in a significantly under-researched area.

# 2

**Why does partnership  
between universities and  
Black and Minority Ethnic  
communities matter?**

## This project can be understood as part of a much wider international debate about how knowledge is produced by universities and how this relates to forms of knowledge, experience and expertise outside the academy.

This debate has deep roots and multiple sources. It is informed, in part, by arguments that universities should be more accountable to and engaged with wider society.<sup>5</sup> It is also informed by the growing recognition in a number of fields – namely, science and technology studies, feminist and critical race traditions, critical disability studies, history from below<sup>6</sup> – that **who is involved** in the production of knowledge fundamentally matters. It matters, because who is involved will shape what questions are asked, what values and ethics will inform the research, what sorts of knowledge will be valued, who will benefit from the research, and what impacts the research will have on society.

To date, questions of race and ethnicity have either been absent (our literature review suggests very limited discussion of this in mainstream research policy and literature) or viewed through the lens of indigenous knowledge traditions and their relations with university and western knowledge.<sup>7</sup> The insights from this work on indigenous knowledge are important, but they cannot be simply appropriated from their own contexts and applied unquestioningly in the UK context. There is a significant difference, for example, between the concerns of Maori and Quechua communities in New Zealand and Peru and the concerns of third generation Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities living in London and Leeds, notwithstanding that the critiques of contemporary science and universities may be common to both.

In the UK, where race has been a question of concern in the university sector, it has primarily been seen through two lenses: widening participation and representation, namely the concern that university staff and student bodies should reflect the make-up of the wider UK population; and, more recently, the calls to ‘decolonise the curriculum’ and ensure that curriculum draws upon and reflects the different cultural and knowledge traditions within the UK.

The recent pre-occupation within universities with greater inclusion and decolonisation is also situated within a societal context where race is and always has been volatile, where many face daily discrimination and most institutional structures ignore (at best) their contribution to British life. Within some of the BME communities there is an anxiety about the potential for expulsion based on race. Sadly, the Windrush debacle and the policy of creating a ‘hostile environment’ give substance to this perceived threat.

There is, despite this, growing interest in inclusion and decolonisation in universities and in university-community collaborations in general, however, very little analysis of how questions of race equality intersect with the work of universities as institutions concerned with research and scholarship. In fact, existing studies of the intersection between race and research partnerships are limited to a small number of first hand experiences that offer powerful testimony of individuals’ often negative experiences in the academy.<sup>8</sup>

5

See, for example, Watson, et al. (2011) *The Engaged University: International Perspectives on Civic Engagement*. London: Routledge.

Hall, B. (2009) ‘Higher Education, Community Engagement and the Public Good: Building the Future of Continuing Education in Canada’ *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education* 35 (1).

Watson, D. (2014) *The Question of Conscience: Higher Education and Personal Responsibility*. London: IOE Press.

Wynne, B. (1996) ‘A reflexive view of the expert-lay knowledge divide: Risk, environment and modernity: towards a new ecology’, 44–83. London: Sage.

Pain, R., et al. (2012) *Participatory action research toolkit: an introduction to using PAR as an approach to learning, research and action*. Durham: Durham University.

6

See, for example, Jasanoff, S. (2011) ‘Constitutional Moments in Governing Science and Technology’ *Science and Engineering Ethics* 17 (4): 621–638.

Kinpaibsy, Mrs. (2008) ‘Taking stock of participatory geographies: envisioning the communiversity’ *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33 (3): 292–299.

Eubanks, V. (2009) ‘Double-bound: putting the power back into participatory research’ *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30 (1): 107–137.

Charlton, James I. (1998) *Nothing about us without us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

7

See, for example, Smith, L. T. (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

8

For example, Rasool, Z. (2017) ‘Collaborative Working Practices: Imagining Better Research Partnerships’ *Research for All* 1 (2): 310–322.

People’s Knowledge Editorial Collective (2016) *People’s Knowledge and Participatory Action Research: Escaping the white-walled labyrinth*. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing. Available at: <http://www.peoplesknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Peoples-Knowledge-and-Participatory-Action-Research-Book.pdf>

We can, however, locate our inquiry into how universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities collaborate within the wider field of research into university–community collaborations as a whole. Over the last few years, this field has systematically identified a set of practical and theoretical issues relating to the development of collaborative research partnerships. These include:

- the difficulty of small community organisations establishing contacts with universities;
- problems of language and communication between academics/ universities and partners;
- tensions over power and decision–making in the research process;
- the need for innovation in research methods and funding models in order to facilitate the development of longer term collaborations;
- the critical importance of trust, time and long–term commitments to partnership;
- the role of brokers and facilitators in enabling and fostering new partnerships;
- the lack of fit for purpose finance, legal and HR systems to enable new forms of collaboration;
- the need for different forms of ethical procedures.<sup>9</sup>

Our aims in this report will be to recognise this context and seek to move beyond this existing knowledge in order to:

- explore the commonalities we found between the experiences of our interviewees and workshop participants and this wider landscape of community–university partnerships; and
- examine specifically how race, culture and ethnicity come into play as additional and exacerbating factors in impeding or shaping the development of partnerships.

9

See, in particular, Banks, S. and Manners, P. (2012) *Community-based participatory research: a guide to ethical principles and practice*. Bristol: National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement.

Banks, S., et al. (2013) 'Everyday ethics in community-based participatory research' *Contemporary Social Science*, 8 (3): 263–277.

Brydon–Miller, M. (2008) 'Ethics and Action Research: Deepening our Commitment to Principles of Social Justice and Refining Systems of Democratic Practice' in P. Reason and H. Bradbury (eds.) *Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participatory Inquiry and Practice*. New York: Sage.

# Methods

# 3

The aim of this work is to understand the nature of the collaborations that are being built between universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities. These collaborations are highly diverse, and this diversity can be understood along a number of lines:

**Form of collaboration:** There are a range of different types of partnerships – from longstanding institutional arrangements supported by memoranda of understanding in which partners share the same physical buildings, to short-term knowledge exchange activities; from deeply co-produced research programmes, to mutually beneficial contributions to governance and teaching.

**Motives and intention:** Projects are characterised by highly diverse artistic, political and social commitments in which participants are seeking variously to produce social change, new academic knowledge, artistic outcomes or institutional developments.

**Community and identity:** There is no single 'BME community'. Instead, it is imperative to recognise that communities are characterised in different ways and at different times by culture, ethnicity and racialisation and with radically different sets of expertise and needs between and within them.

**Focus area:** There is no one topic area that characterises these partnerships – they are concerned with issues that range from the collection of unrecorded cultural heritage to addressing the human costs of migration policy, from the creation of new artistic practices to the co-development of new social policy.

**Institutional structures:** There is no single set of characteristics that defines a 'community partner' – they may be a one-person activist or artist or a large national delivery organisation. Similarly, universities and academic partners cannot be easily characterised, they may be ancient institutions and leading professors with significant institutional power, or actively engaged new universities and early career researchers positioned precariously in the academy.

Given this diversity and the consequent impossibility of tracking down all projects that will be recorded under very different names and purposes, we do not set out to produce a definitive statement about the scale and make-up of collaborations between Black and Minority Ethnic communities and universities in the UK today.



Projects are characterised by highly diverse artistic, political and social commitments in which participants are seeking variously to produce social change, new academic knowledge, artistic outcomes or institutional developments.



Our aim, instead, is to give readers a sense of the richness and diversity of the collaborations that do exist, and to understand the underlying common features that enabled or impeded their success. A full account of our methods is available in the Appendices to this report; but to provide a rapid summary, our work involved:

**1** An analysis of funders' publicly available databases to identify examples of university-BME community research collaborations. (It quickly became clear, however, that very limited information relating to ethnicity is captured in these databases, that the information available is not recorded systematically and that there are significant problems with terminology that impede systematic searching.) Our online analysis was therefore complemented by a survey and word of mouth requests for information over a four-month period. The database produced as part of this mapping phase formed the sampling frame for our case study selection.

**2** A series of full day workshops involving 89 participants from universities and BME communities, held in Birmingham, Cardiff, London, Glasgow, Liverpool and Nottingham. These workshops brought together individuals, cultural, community and creative organisations as well as academics who had previously been involved in partnerships.

**3** 19 case studies of individual projects selected from the initial analysis of funders' datasets for their diversity in terms of geography and participating community. These case studies comprised detailed in-depth interviews conducted by Mhemooda Malek with the academic and community lead for each project. These case studies are available in full online here [www.commoncauseresearch.com/case-studies](http://www.commoncauseresearch.com/case-studies) along with a series of films for many of the projects. All case studies were drafted and sent to participants for comment and corrections before producing a final version.

The online survey and case studies were conducted in 2017, with analysis in early 2018. The 19 projects that we studied in detail and on which this report is based are:

#### **60 Untold Stories of Black Britain**

A collaboration between Friends of Marsha Phoenix Trust and Goldsmiths, University of London.

#### **Bass Culture**

A collaboration between Black Cultural Archives and the University of Westminster.

#### **The Bigger Picture:**

**Impact of Intergenerational Arts Programmes on Minority Communities.**

A collaboration between Nottingham Contemporary, New Art Exchange, the National Justice Museum, Bright Ideas Nottingham, Midlands3Cities, Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham.

#### **Chinese Digital Story Telling Project:**

**Immigrant Experience of First Generation Chinese Immigrants in Swansea and Surrounding Areas.**

A collaboration between Swansea Chinese Community Co-Op Centre and Swansea University.

#### **Green and Black – PhotoVoice:**

**Through My Lens.**

A collaboration between Ujima Radio and the University of Bristol.

#### **Imagine:**

**Writing in the Community.**

A collaboration between communities in Rotherham and the University of Sheffield.

#### **In Flux**

A collaboration between Excavate and the Centre for Hidden Histories.

#### **Instruments India:**

**Intercultural Creativity in Electroacoustic Music. Integrating Indian music cultural sound emblems into new works.**

A collaboration between Milapfest and Liverpool Hope University.

#### **Khyal:**

**Music and Imagination.**

A collaboration between GemArts and Durham University.

#### **Life Chances:**

**Reimagining regulatory systems for low income families in modern urban settings.**

A collaboration between University of Bristol and South Riverside Community Development Centre.

#### **Making Histories:**

**Teaching community, heritage and diversity in the National History Curriculum.**

A collaboration between Runnymede Trust, the University of Manchester and the University of Cambridge.

#### **Minding Black Histories**

A collaboration between the African Community Heritage Hub and Birmingham City University.

#### **PASAR:**

**Participatory Arts and Social Action in Research.**

A collaboration between Praxis Community Projects and the PASAR Project.

#### **Slave Trade Legacies:**

**Colour of Money and Global Cotton Connections: East meets west in the Derbyshire Peak District, UK.**

A collaboration between Bright Ideas Nottingham and the University of Nottingham.

#### **Hidden Histories of World War One:**

**Ramgarhia Sikh Tapestry Project.**

A collaboration between the Ramgarhia Social Sisters and the Centre for Hidden Histories.

#### **The Southall Story**

A collaboration between independent artists and the University of Exeter.

#### **The Bench Project**

A collaboration between Greenwich Inclusion project and the University of Sheffield.

#### **What I'd like you to know about me:**

**Translating the Experience of Emotional Distress (part of Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State).**

A collaboration between Glasgow Clyde College and the University of Glasgow.

#### **Vernacular Religion:**

**Varieties of Religiosity in the Nepali Diaspora**

A collaboration between the Centre for Nepal Studies UK and the University of Oxford.

# Understanding the value of collaboration

# 4

## When they work, these projects generate significant academic personal and social benefits. Consider, for example, the work and influence of the Bass Culture Project:

**T** The Bass Culture Project aims to understand the hidden history of Jamaican influences on British Music in the UK from the 1960s to the present day. The project aims to locate, capture and preserve memories, experiences and ephemera from three generations of musicians, music industry participants, and audience members. It is creating a cultural archive of oral history records, materials and artefacts from this period that would otherwise have been lost or treated as family rather than cultural history. The project, and associated activities, have served as a stimulus for the development of new networks, bringing together diverse smaller cultural organisations; for the development of performances and exhibitions. It has also played an important role in correcting the historical record – for example, it holds in its archive first-hand accounts of the development of Rock against Racism, including, for example, an interview with Caryl Phillips about the concerts and speeches that stimulated the movement. It has played an important role in changing large white-led national cultural organisations, supporting them to learn to engage with Black cultural and creative sectors and stay up to date with their creative output. It has underpinned and stimulated changes in policy, producing reports that demonstrate the creative and economic impact of under-recognised music sectors, and it has facilitated young Black researchers and artists to actively use and engage with the archives of large cultural organisations.

Across these 19 projects, we have been able to document a significant legacy of highly diverse outputs and outcomes that include: academic books and publications; new publicly accessible historical archives; new courses and workshops for publics and students as well as online educational resources; new creative outputs – from musical compositions to art works and theatrical performances; skills development within communities and in universities; policy impacts at local and national government level; contributions to NGO campaigns and programmes; new confidence and profile for participants; and new networks developed between participants. Such legacies are also, perhaps most importantly, associated with changing the historical record and making visible experiences and cultures that had previously been invisible. As one project participant observed:

“I remember the exhibition launch ... I was just thinking ‘I’m so glad we got that, I’m so glad we got that’ [...] that has captured that little bubble of information that would have been gone and it was captured.”

What does it take, however, to build these partnerships that are changing historical records and creating powerful new resources, and what is impeding more of them being developed? It is to this question now that we turn for the remainder of this report.

5

**The context:  
structural  
inequalities**

The generic phrase 'Black and Minority Ethnic communities' evidently obscures the significant diversity of communities and organisations who might partner with universities to build research knowledge. These include the lone activist or artist with a brilliant idea; the civil society organisation with deep networks in local communities; or a nationally and internationally recognised cultural institution with deep research expertise and powerful social capital. There is no single type of 'community partner' with whom universities might collaborate. Similarly, there is no single type of university: there are research-intensive universities with significant levels of research funding and international profiles, with white majority staffing and high levels of international staff and students; equally, there are locally – and civic – facing universities with a deep commitment to their local community and to reflecting the needs and experiences of these communities in their teaching and research and whose staff and student body more closely reflects the population in the areas around them. These different institutional, cultural and economic positions mean that partners experience very different conditions for building research collaborations.

**D**espite this diversity, a number of long-standing structural inequalities are common to many institutions and cultural organisations, which have excluded or minimised the contribution, voice, narrative and participation of certain communities. These exclusions and/or minimisations may have taken, or continue to take, the form of isolation, dismissal, stereotypical portrayals or even discriminatory practices. Forming partnerships within this environment can be challenging, as well as frustrating, as collaborators navigate complex cultural, political and historical conditions that may reinforce or even strengthen dominant narratives about migration, difference and belonging – to name but a few of these themes.

Within our work, we found that partnerships have come about through hard work – and sometimes, intense challenges by all parties to structural inequalities, discriminatory conditions and deeply embedded power dynamics that continue to act as barriers to equitable relationships.

Some of the partnerships that formed the basis for our case studies were longstanding well-established collaborations between relatively robust community organisations and universities, with participants on both sides having research expertise and sharing a common language. These partnerships emerged from common social networks between academics and partners. In many cases, they were based on longstanding collaborations in which individuals were deeply connected with each other's work and organisations. **Making Histories**, for example, is based on over a decade of collaboration, with the individuals concerned having worked together in other organisations before starting this project. **Imagine** was based on a longstanding friendship between the academic and community partner, based on a shared love of poetry. The activity we studied in the **Researching Multi-Lingually** project, entitled **What I'd like you to know about me: Translating the experience of emotional distress**, was based

on shared professional networks dating back over 20 years. In one case, **Intercultural Creativity**, the partnership was fostered by institutional arrangements in which the community organisation was physically located in the university campus. In other cases, academics were already playing a role as board members for partner organisations, making the research relationship easier to negotiate.

These longstanding partnerships, however, need to be understood as having been developed against a background which actively militates against Black and Minority Ethnic organisations building such collaborations with universities.

## Universities as white majority institutions

**F**irst, these collaborations are produced in conditions in which universities in the UK are still seen as being distant from and at times hostile to the histories, expertise and interests of Black and Minority Ethnic communities. The low level of representation of BME individuals in the staff body, particularly in research intensive institutions, is well recognised.<sup>10</sup> More than this, however, universities are seen as alien and unwelcoming spaces for those who are not already insiders. As one of our interviewees, a senior Black community leader and academic, observed of his views of universities before becoming active as a leading figure within them:

**"I was in fear of the institutions that administered the degrees. It's because there was this assumed perception that somehow, they knew more, these spaces knew more, had the authority, these spaces wrote the books that you would have to study in a language that was often alien, these spaces delivered the individuals that created the laws, you knew these spaces historically rejected you, and didn't reflect your history, the faces in these spaces didn't represent you and often didn't like you ... So, when entering these spaces, you didn't feel comfortable."**

Indeed, universities are seen by some of our interviewees and in the wider public debate at present<sup>11</sup> as sites of institutional racism in which Black History is neglected both as a discrete topic and elsewhere within the curriculum, and in which there is a lack of opportunity to study Black History and contemporary issues. This persistent institutional marginalisation positions the contribution of excluded communities as being of no value, unfit for exploration and of limited relevance or importance to the prevailing historical narrative. This undermines the confidence and pursuit of identity by Black students and others looking to find themselves in the prevailing self-affirming bias. This, in turn, suggests that the projects detailed in the case studies are pioneers located on the margins, who are uncertain about whether their knowledge counts and what knowledge still matters. As one of the community partners observes:

**"In relation to Black and Minority Ethnic people the unequal power relations can mean that they automatically think that others further up the hierarchy know better than them. The impact of structural discrimination on knowledge production relates to who we come to see as experts with authority on a subject."**

Under these circumstances, universities are far from being seen as natural collaborators or allies for Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

<sup>10</sup>

Andrews, K. "The Black Studies Movement in Britain." *The Black Scholar*. October 6, 2016. <http://www.theblackscholar.org/black-studies-movement-britain/>

HESA. Staff by Ethnicity, 16/17. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff>

<sup>11</sup>

Bhopal, K. (2017) 'Addressing racial inequalities in higher education: equity, inclusion and social justice' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (13): 2293-2299.

Amos, V. "It's time for universities to make race equality a priority." *The Guardian* May 16, 2018. [https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2018/may/16/its-time-for-universities-to-make-race-equality-a-priority?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2018/may/16/its-time-for-universities-to-make-race-equality-a-priority?CMP=share_btn_tw)

## Under-resourced BME civil society infrastructure

\*  
**Grassroots communities are addressing more immediate and urgent issues associated with race, racism and, in the case of refugees or more recent migrants, with state bureaucracy. These issues necessarily take precedence and actively militate against communities' involvement in research activity.**  
\*

**A**t the same time in the community sector, where resources are required to initiate, build and develop research capacity. There are few Black and Minority Ethnic-led organisations that are sufficiently well resourced to take risks developing long term relationships.

The limited number of national infrastructure organisations that do exist are suffering from significant cuts in funding since 2010. As one community partner reported:

“We’ve lost a number of BME organisations and this is due to the cuts. They didn’t survive.”

Another observed of one of the few organisations with a national profile:

“Its funding base has changed dramatically in the time that I’ve worked with them because the race equality sector has basically died. You know when I started working with them they had ... a quarter of their money came from government, now nothing comes from government, everything is pretty much project funding.”

At the same time, small organisations are often competing with each other for funding, impeding collaboration within the same sector, as one interviewee observed:

“Because of the competitive nature of community projects, and the scarcity of funding opportunities, people are very wary of partnerships. A big challenge has been convincing projects of the need to come together to enhance potential funding.”

These conditions mean that under-resourced and under-valued organisations have limited time and bandwidth to dedicate to new partnerships. In this context, staff turnover can be significant as organisations are dependent on project-based rather than core funding. Networks and partnerships that might be developed then struggle to be sustained as individuals have to move around the sector to take on new roles. Many of the BME groups would argue that in the terrain of the voluntary sector, they also experience a disregard for their contribution and expertise. This has led to an historic cycle of underfunding and erosion of BME voluntary sector infrastructure. This underfunding is one of the aspects that means that the presumption that the race problem in all its manifestations would vanish over time with each new generation is profoundly naïve and manifestly ignores the economic and structural factors that continue to sustain it.

Grassroots communities are also addressing more immediate and urgent issues associated with race, racism and, in the case of refugees or more recent migrants, with state bureaucracy. These issues necessarily take precedence and actively militate against communities' involvement in research activity. One community partner reported that his community has to deal with police harassment and stop and search; another talked of the difficulties facing Asian women participating in projects at the same time as BNP marches are taking place. A community artist observed that his collaborators were having to handle complex issues around immigration status, housing and employment at all times. As he said:

“It’s much more difficult to [develop] projects with people who don’t know if they’re going to be called in to the Home Office and sent off at any time you know. Or college, you know going to college to do English classes means that your availability is kind of being impacted a lot of the time. Suddenly you have a house available ... you know a flat available to you [...]”

These organisations and communities, therefore, are facing and have continuously faced significant obstacles in many areas, which means that developing collaboration with universities may be a relatively low priority in relation to other more pressing challenges. Those BME organisations that do enter into collaborations, then, mostly do so with apprehension and uncertainty. They often moderate their expectations as they try to secure, through the partnership, evidence of their value to use in other arenas and/or to leverage future financial resources. This invariably affects the relationship and generates a contractual understanding rather than a collaborative relationship that is present from the outset. Such a contractual understanding, driven by economic necessity, can militate against the development of research proposals that are likely to be funded.

## A history of mistrust

**A**t the same time, communities who have been involved in research in the past are increasingly wary of and alert to the risks of building research collaborations. As L.T. Smith observes, for some communities, 'research' is a dirty word associated with exploitation and colonialism.<sup>12</sup> Two of our project interviewees reported encountering and experiencing significant frustration with being used for extractive research by universities in the past and concerns about the short-term nature of the engagement.

"I think to communities to hear 'research' means someone's going to come in and use ... or someone's going to come in and take, and that's it. It stems from this very short-term nature of research that universities tend to do. So they'll get funding to carry out a certain amount of research with a certain amount of time, normally like three or five months or something, unless there's a huge bit of funding and then it can be a long-term thing. But because of the short-term nature it is a very quick 'we're going to get what we need and then we're going to leave' and people in communities do notice that."

Unsurprisingly, communities have had to become particularly alert to the risks of tokenism and tick box cultures in which partnerships are developed not from shared interests but simply for university benefit. As two experienced community partners observe:

"I think most people who've been in the sector for a while can smell tokenism. And I think that could be more damaging than strategic engagement. I think if it becomes tokenistic you know it almost feels like this is classic ... it's about anti-racism really, not diversity. So if this ends up being a splash of colour all around [this funder's] projects, then you know we've got a significant problem, we've got a significant problem."

"I think the only other challenge that we'd faced was as a repercussion of what the university had previously done [...] we visited someone who's ... a gatekeeper for the Somali community, and we went to him and asked him oh can we speak to the elders and is there a way for us to get people excited by our project and get them engaged. And he came back to us sort of seeming a little bitter about how a lot of universities ... have gone to the community and done loads of research projects but have never actually quite given anything back. And he seemed like he was just at the end of his tether and was like 'if you want to work with us, then you're going to have to work with us for a longer amount of time and then get to know people and maybe do some kind of event for them and feed the elders before you can do the research because they feel like they're just being used'."

<sup>12</sup> Smith, L. T. (1999) *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

One consequence of these experiences is that community organisations with experience of university partnership are beginning to establish clear ground rules and expectations about the longevity, sustainability and commitment to community that they expect to underpin any new partnership. One partner, for example, refused to allow the university to work with the young refugees in her college without a commitment to these students over the longer term. Another now has very clear financial rules:

“Unless it comes with significant resources for a new project staff member I would say no. Because you’ve got to really ask whether we can absorb the extra work. And given that the legacy is questionable, we need to be very clear.”

## Summary: a context of structural discrimination and inequalities

Taken together then, it is clear that there is structural discrimination and, therefore, structural inequalities that create the conditions within which collaborations between Black and Minority Ethnic communities and universities are being built. These inequalities exist, in some instances, within longer patterns of dismissal and a refusal to absorb and share the knowledges, histories and cultures that have existed within the UK. Yet within our case studies we saw evidence of longstanding, robust and powerful collaborations that had been developed successfully where individuals and organisations had taken the time and care to address these issues. In reflecting on our earlier work in the project and these collaborations, we see the need for further reflection on these issues:

- The perception and reality of universities as white majority institutions lacking openness to ideas and expertise from outside the institution.
- The fact that research partnerships tend to emerge from existing social and institutional networks which exclude communities without strong social and cultural links into or paths to access individuals within universities.
- The lack of investment in large infrastructure organisations in the UK to support and represent BME communities’ arts, cultural and humanities interests, meaning that there are relatively few organisations able to initiate and develop long term sustained partnerships.
- The limited capacity of small resource-rich but cash-strapped cultural and community organisations to get involved in developing research proposals, compounded by conditions of economic austerity.
- The negative longer-term impact of previous extractive research on Black and Minority Ethnic communities that has led to mistrust in some sectors towards any form of partnership with universities.

More positively, we are also seeing:

- The growing confidence in some community organisations in developing ground rules and clear expectations for research partnerships that allow them to develop realistic timescales and financial agreements that benefit communities and hold external partners accountable for their behaviour and actions.

# 6

## Making connections and first encounters

Building research collaborations requires, in the first instance, making connections between organisations, individuals and universities. This is in part about finding a way into universities and also who to trust. This is often far from straightforward.

## The inaccessibility of the university

**F**or non-academics (as well as for many academics) universities can be inaccessible, confusing organisations, with no clear mechanisms for making contact. No matter their size, many universities have inconsistent processes for community engagement. In many instances, communities that want to approach the university remain uncertain about the best way to navigate the university and who specifically to call upon. As two community partners we interviewed observed:

“I’ve got an idea about a piece of research to do with Arts and Humanities but you don’t know how to approach them [...] they say [...] that you have to have university partners, like a researcher, but you don’t know how to approach them.”

“Where do you start with making contact? Universities should have a first contact point for university-community collaborative work, this would really help communities to explore or initiate research that they see as relevant or want to do.”

## Low levels of BME staff

**T**his inaccessibility is exacerbated by questions of race and ethnicity. As already discussed, British universities, in particular British research-intensive universities, do not reflect the diversity of the UK population with low levels of BME academic staff, particularly at a senior level.

The fact that most British universities clearly and visibly do not reflect the diversity of the UK population means that some of our case study interviewees reported a sense that universities were less likely to be interested in the expertise and concerns of BME communities. Senior BME academics who they partnered with were seen as the exception rather than representative of the university and its general interest in partnership:

“You know, there are not many professors like them, they are still massively under-represented. So having that representation in the academy really makes a difference on obviously what gets taught, what gets researched, but also whether or not it touches the third sector at all. So that’s massively important. And that does determine the type of collaborations that might exist in future.”

Even with these more positive considerations, recent research makes clear the extra work — especially around issues of inclusion — that visible minorities within the academy often take on, such as, in some instances, mentoring students and engaging in community partnerships.<sup>13</sup> This may be work that is — or possibly is not — recognised as important, even though it may be essential to eradicating structural inequalities and improving relations between the university and Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

For this reason, while addressing low levels of BME staff is critical, it is not the solution. There has to be greater capacity built amongst the white academics.

13

Matthew, P. A. (2016) “What is Faculty Diversity Worth to a University?” *The Atlantic* Nov 23, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/11/what-is-faculty-diversity-worth-to-a-university/508334/>

Mahtani, M. (2004) ‘Mapping Race and Gender in the Academy: The Experiences of Women of Colour Faculty and Graduate Students in Britain, the US and Canada’ *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 28 (1): 91–99.

Pittman, C. T. (2010) ‘Race and Gender Oppression in the Classroom: The Experiences of Women Faculty of Color with White Male Students’ *Teaching Sociology* 38 (3): 183–196.

## Patchy cultural competency amongst white academics

**I**ndeed, within the university, a number of our academic interviewees observed that white academics often had very limited social networks with BME communities and a lack of cultural understanding, making them both nervous as well as poorly skilled, to build collaborations with other communities. In several of the case studies white academics referred to the challenging learning curve that at times nearly fractured the collaboration; however, working through the tensions made them and the relationship stronger. In such cases, collaborators reported high levels of commitment, shared interests, a capacity to listen and learn and to build partnerships amongst white academics working with Black and Minority Ethnic partners. Such individuals were still seen, however, by these interviewees, as the exception rather than the rule.

“I know that there are people [white academics] who for the best of intentions, are frightened about having conversations because they’re going to use the wrong terminology, they’re going to say something dreadful. Conversely other people don’t worry about that and they go and do say something appalling.”

“It’s got to be right. Yeah, cos I did go to the School of Education, one of the meetings I think, and you know some people have a good understanding and [academic partner] worked in, her background was CRE [Council for Racial Equality] community development. Also you come across community researchers that you connect with as well, so it is the right kind of person. Otherwise you send the wrong kind of academic, it can destroy a lot you know, like [academic partner] has built a lot of relationships between the community and the university. So if someone else comes without the necessary knowledge and skills, it can be undone quickly.”

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There are not only the usual obstacles to initiating community-university partnerships faced by all of those without the existing networks and experience of academic practices, but longstanding, culturally embedded problems relating to race, ethnicity and culture that significantly intensify the barriers to such collaboration.  
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## Racism, stereotyping and microaggressions

**B**lack workshop participants also reported problems when they did approach universities for partnership. Some, with doctorates, reported being treated not as a potential research collaborator but as a ‘member of the public’ to be ‘engaged with’ and ‘communicated to’. Others reported being turned away from university information desks and being told that there were no cleaning jobs available or that the institution did not take people for community service; while others gave examples of white academics failing to make eye contact with them and being talked over and ignored in initial meetings.

When initial discussions about potential collaborations did take place, interviewees reported having to overcome stereotypes and microaggressions. One project reported, for example, how they continue to have to work hard to challenge stereotypes of Muslim women not being able to speak English when they are approached for partnerships by both government and university partners, as well as the assumption that speaking to Muslim men in mosques means that they are speaking to the ‘Muslim community’. Another similarly reported having to overcome stereotypes about the Nepalese community.

Research funders are making attempts to build new collaborations by hosting 'research sandpits', workshops designed to broker new relationships between community partners and universities. One of our interviewees, however, described his experience of one of these workshops as being 'codified by whiteness' leading to a 'fetishisation of ethnicity', given the very small number of academic and community BME participants. This account echoes another recent description from the wider literature of participation in similar research matchmaking events.<sup>14</sup> These were seen as particularly hostile places for BME participants.

There are, therefore, not only the usual obstacles to initiating community-university partnerships faced by all of those without the existing (white and class based) social networks and experience of academic practices, but longstanding, culturally embedded problems relating to race, ethnicity and culture that significantly intensify the barriers to such collaboration.

## Powerful community social networks as counter-balance

It is notable, however, that some groups are better placed to initiate partnerships. The Vernacular Religion project, for example, was developed when a group of Nepalis living in the UK, all with social science PhDs, came together to develop their own project mapping the presence and experience of Nepalis in the UK. They found an academic with specialism in this area, approached him and established a first point of contact successfully. This did not, in the first instance, lead to a joint project, but drew on the university academics' expertise to help develop research questions. In time, this led to a joint project between the community researchers and the university researchers, in which the community researchers' database and voluntary community data collection was a powerful resource for the development of the funding proposal and for the project itself. Similarly, the 60 Untold Stories project was developed by a well-respected local community leader with longstanding senior relationships with the university and who was able to mobilise the support of the University Warden (Vice Chancellor/Chief Executive) to facilitate conversations and secure additional university support for the project.

Not all communities, however, have the academic experience, social networks, trust and confidence that could facilitate this sort of encounter. There are, then, significant barriers facing individuals from BME groups who wish to initiate partnership with universities without prior social networks and/or academic social capital that can mobilise collaboration and funding.

14

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## Summary: making connections

**B**uilding collaborative research projects involves making connections and stimulating respectful and mutually beneficial conversations.

- Universities rarely have open and transparent advice on how to make connections and build research partnerships.
- There are low levels of Black and Minority Ethnic academic staff in UK universities, particularly at senior level and in research-intensive universities, meaning that universities are not seen as representing or welcoming to all communities and making it harder for informal networks to emerge.
- Experiences of racism and stereotyping of BME communities by universities impede the development of trust and early conversations when initial conversations are established.
- There is an uneven level of cultural competency amongst white academics.
- Attempts to build new partnerships between universities and BME communities can be characterised by tokenism and a fetishization of ethnicity.
- The development of partnerships too often becomes the sole responsibility of visible minority academic staff members.

At the same time, it is notable that some communities have succeeded in building powerful social and academic capital that enables them to proactively and confidently build relationships with universities in different ways. Where this was successful these projects, however, tended to remain short-term, did not always confer equal value on the contribution of these communities and risked being marginalised within university structures and operational culture/systems.



**Some communities have succeeded in building powerful social and academic capital that enables them to proactively and confidently build relationships with universities in different ways. Where this was successful these projects, however, tended to remain short-term.**





**Building trust  
between project  
partners and  
with participants**

**7**

Projects do, however, get off the ground despite these obstacles and successfully manage to create powerful research collaborations. What does this take? In the interviews and the wider research, the importance of building trust was seen as central.

**T**rust has to be built in these projects between at least three key participants: the 'community partner' (in these projects usually a civil society or cultural organisation or an independent creative practitioner); the 'university partner' (who may be a precariously employed junior researcher, a member of a university engagement team or a senior academic); and the 'community participants' in projects themselves (these can be individuals who are experts or witnesses being interviewed about their knowledge or experiences, volunteer community researchers gathering data or making art work, or individuals who are hoped to be beneficiaries from the research).

Our case studies provide insights into the different forms of trust building that are required to secure mutual understanding and confidence to get projects off the ground. These include:

- The role of brokers between university and community partners.
- The importance of respect for different forms of knowledge and procedures of co-production.
- The role of brokers between project teams and community participants.
- The necessity of safe and equitable spaces to explore 'sticky topics' in a constructive manner, including spaces for meetings and project activities.
- The development of appropriate ethical procedures.
- The need to understand different parties' aims, agendas and personal commitments to the joint endeavour. What was also notable was the significant negative impact on developing trusted relationships played by:
  - Alienating institutional spaces.
  - Home Office border control requirements.
  - Inappropriate university ethics procedures.

## The role of brokers between university and community partners

**B**rokers are central to the development of collaborative research projects. They operate at a number of different stages and processes in the development of projects. First, brokers often play an important role in facilitating new partnerships and making introductions. Mediators, for example, make introductions and offer advice to community organisations about university cultures and expectations, and to universities about how to work with different cultures and communities. As one interviewee observed, this was essential in preparing them to work with communities facing very different circumstances from their own:

“We went to the Refugee Forum. Nottingham Refugee Forum and the Red Cross. First of all we spoke to somebody who we knew that worked at the Refugee Forum and explained the project, what is ethically the best way to approach this, what should we not be doing. So we went through gate holders ... people who work with those communities. And we basically asked for advice. And then they suggested people for us to talk to. And then from that it kind of span out.”

Mediating organisations are also important in building coalitions and networks and in addressing potential sources of conflict between groups:

“One of the reasons I like [mediating organisation] is it's not a confrontational organisation around that, you know it's very much about this is where we are and let's work with where we are to get people on board, which I think has been the kind of dominant ethos. And I think that's really important. If you're going to ask people to be collaborative, you don't want to start off by alienating the people that you're working with.”

“The network doesn't exist, that's the first point, so brokering might be the activity that develops a network that doesn't actually exist or is not recognised as existing, because actually it does exist, but it doesn't present itself in a way that is tangible, you might know someone over there that's doing something, but because of the competitive nature of the BME community it's lots of people competing to do the same thing, so they won't share information. And one of the challenges was saying you know we need to work together, individually you will not get funding.”

“Academics often don't know what needs to be done and how, and don't have those contacts [...] very few academics have those real community based contacts that they can turn into significant, particularly national level impact. We would never have had the impact that we have without [...] that had that reputation, it had those connections.”

These brokers might be friends, might be operating on a formal or informal basis, might be simply in the right place at the right time. Mediators identified in the case studies ranged from national charities to individuals with hybrid identities who bridge both community and university worlds.

Brokers are particularly important to the process of making and sustaining initial connections between communities and universities. They make introductions, establish networks but also play an important role in overcoming difficulties in initial partnerships. Often with a foot in both 'worlds', they can help significantly in overcoming the difficulties, misunderstandings and sometimes hostility of a first meeting, translating the expectations of different partners and building confidence on both sides.

Beyond the facilitation of first contact, the broker embodies a safety valve, capable and trusted on both sides to constructively challenge prejudices, encourage institutional learning and build capacity to undertake respectful interactions. It is worth noting, however, that while brokers may enhance others' relationships, they may also have a complex and sometimes challenging role in the community, as well as within university structures.

## The importance of respect for different forms of knowledge and procedures of co-production

**T**he case studies suggest that the creation of trusted relationships was facilitated by a culture of respect and recognition for the different sets of expertise and knowledge that all parties can bring to the table. In two of our case studies, this was framed within the language of ‘co-production’ of knowledge, a framing that makes clear that all partners are able to contribute expertise to the development of the project. As one community partner observed:

“So the main sort of line going [...] has been co-production, and so we acknowledge that we need to all be on the same equal level playing field at the table, having an equal say in everything.”

In others, this was articulated as the need to recognise the value of different forms of project activities and outputs:

“Can a landscape architect learn something from an NGO addressing hate crime and vice versa? What do/can they produce which is of mutual concern? It is important to recognise that raising the voices and influence of BME groups requires some acknowledgement and that non-theory based outputs are a valid and credit-worthy outcome of research.”

In others, this was articulated as respect for the knowledge of community organisations and the fact that they understand and know very clearly what is needed to work successfully in and with different communities:

“Black and Minority Ethnic communities should be trusted to find a target audience and beneficiaries they want to work with and be supported to work within their own structures. Often what we do is we come and impose our own mechanisms onto community partners. We say we’re listening, but we’re not really.”

## The role of brokers between project teams and community participants

**A** key role played by community partners in research collaborations is often to act as brokers between the project team as a whole and the community participants in the wider community. Here, the expertise and convening power of the community partners is essential to building the trust of participants to join projects. Such expertise and convening power is often based on many years of intense work and collaboration with the relevant communities and is critical to the success of the project. As one academic observed of her partnership with a leading arts organisation:

“The musician would say to me that ‘Milapfest asked me and I’ll do anything for Milapfest’ it’s because of that relationship.”

The convening power and brokerage may also be built on shared life experiences and embodied knowledge. As another academic observed of her partners:

“It’s been really important to work with brokers, so I went to artists in residence, who are really excellent brokers, they’re multilingual, they’re Black and Minority, they’re all different immigration tracks, they have different status, they can be employed, they’re mature aged people, they’re elders in their own communities. And they therefore represent in deeply embodied form the kinds of people that these young people are missing from their lives [...] And they are the kinds of people that [...] can point to as trusted elders, or as collaborators, or as people who can come in and be part of it.”

Trust, here, is built when university partners respect and understand the nature of brokering role, the expertise it embodies and what it has taken to build this expertise and convening power. It is demonstrated and consolidated when community partners are enabled to support participants in the manner that they know is appropriate. This might mean anything from recognising the unexpected working practices of international superstar musicians to addressing the needs of vulnerable refugee communities or young people.

A critical element of trust in the project partnership, therefore, involves the development of project practices that enable partners to work in what might seem to be – in conventional research terms – unfamiliar ways with participants. These issues need to be addressed and acknowledged at the earliest stages of project design and planning. Whether this means being able to pay individuals in a particular way, enable them to travel in a particular way, or to create particular sorts of spaces to facilitate conversation. Importantly, this means recognising how this type of work contributes to the overall research project and the success of the collaboration. While the need for brokering may be a universal issue for many academics working on collaborative or participatory projects with communities, flexibility in these ways of working may be an essential feature for communities in which histories of inequality, discrimination and/or racism may impact their willingness to partner with universities. Such ways of working may be very different from conventional academic practices, but they are likely to be essential to the success of the collaboration between the university and the community and depend on the expertise of the mediating community organisation to help shape the project in the appropriate manner:

“Because we’re working in a community we have the resource of access and knowing how to speak to certain people in the community. And for the academic world to go into a community and speak to people and do research, that’s a huge barrier for people, and they don’t always know how to approach it and can be very sort of ... too scientific. And then that will even more so push more communities away. So for them to give us the space to do what we need to do in the way that we want to do it, it works for us, because then it means we can just get on with it. And it works for them because then it means that they’re not going into a community and making mistakes.”

## The necessity of safe spaces

Anyone working in the field of community-university partnerships will know the deep importance of creating spaces for dialogue and encounter that enable everyone – community partners, community participants and academics – to feel confident to share their expertise and to listen carefully to others’ views. Community partners can experience being ignored and silenced in meetings with academics. Universities can be alienating places for people – including staff members – as many of its gatekeepers and teams use unfamiliar and inaccessible language and presume that others are familiar with its processes. Communities also have their own languages, codes and ways of working that can exclude others unfamiliar with them, but this alienation must be understood within the power dynamic that can emerge between the often-larger university structure and smaller community partner.

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The importance of creating 'safe' spaces – and by this we do not mean a neutralised space in which ideas cannot be challenged, but precisely a supportive space for honest discussion – is therefore central to building trusted relationships that are able to draw on the expertise of all involved. In our case studies and workshops, the process of creating safe productive spaces for dialogue and partnership, involved a range of different activities relevant at different times for different participants.

In our workshops, for example, the importance of open and honest discussions about the wider context of racism, discrimination and other inequalities at the outset of planning collaborative work was a consistent finding. This was seen as an important basis for establishing good working relationships and considering the potential impact of these issues on subsequent activities.

The majority of the project teams, in addition, talked about the importance of working outside the university campus, of creating spaces for dialogue and discussion beyond the university walls, which were familiar to and comfortable for all participants. They discussed the way in which taking the time to know each other, through simple activities such as eating together or having coffee together, outside formal meetings, would enable individuals to improve the quality of interaction with each other as people beyond their labels, stereotypes and formal roles:

“And I think, again you know, maybe your average academic wouldn't think of that as the importance is before you even talk about the collaboration in detail to say, 'let's have lunch together' or whatever, you know. That there's that sharing thing to open up the space. Because you know community people are very very suspicious of academics. I mean, what is it you want from us, what are you going to do, so it's trying to just kind of humanise that to start off with.”

Within our case studies, creating opportunities for talking and encounter, however, also involved taking active steps to enable individuals from stressed and low-income communities to participate in discussions. This included covering travel costs, childcare costs and providing non-research-related incentives to come along – such as networks, advice and food.

As one academic observed, the process of building and maintaining networks beyond the university involved sustained small steps to begin to create dialogue. She described how they arrange a regular show of films from different cultures at a local cinema to act as a catalyst for conversation and the development of community, providing bus fares and childcare, and small amounts of food to enable vulnerable communities to come to a film and to talk with the academics who are there to listen and understand their experiences.

Such work is slow, takes time, but after a while produces fundamentally different relations between communities and the university. Maximising community resources, people and places, conveys an awareness of the value that exists outside of the university. This reciprocity can enable communities to forge more meaningful relations and more confidently share their experiences and perspectives in other arenas. The same academic describes, for example, the hosting of a major event in her university and the way in which their community collaborators occupied and led the space, after a period of long and sustained work.

Fundamental to these various interactions are clear attempts to find equitable ways of being in space, together and of valuing the thoughts and lived experiences within the community. While this may involve alterations within the university, it must be noted that when collaborations may be between a community partner and a university staff member employed through a fixed-term contract or a postgraduate, then space may be even more of an issue as they may not have access to certain administrative systems, such as room bookings. Thinking critically about space means reflecting on how all of the participants – whether university or community centred – may benefit from equitable and inclusive environments.

## The potential of community-led spaces to generate mutual support

**B**ecause all of our case studies involved partnerships between universities and communities and were concerned with how these developed, we did not explore the issue of how trust and confidence to generate research inquiries might be built within community-led spaces in which there is no academic presence. This need did come out of our workshops, however, and was identified as an area of important future development. Our workshops, led by a non-academic, invested time enabling everyone present to introduce themselves, share experiences and have a voice. Acknowledging the value of community contributions and an awareness of inappropriate interactions by white institutions, laid the ground for honest exchanges. Each of the workshops, generated animated discussions and positive contributions, underpinned by planned and impromptu case studies. These workshops both suggest and model the positive potential for Black-led spaces as a basis for creating opportunities for mutual trust. The interest in this creation of space was sufficient to act as a basis for developing these networks further as a key outcome for the project – although their financial sustainability still needs to be addressed.

We should also note that certain organisations and groups outside of universities can obtain funding from bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund or the Arts Council England. This type of funding, depending on the role and function of the partnering entity, may enable some community partners to explore different issues and themes – with less dependency on the university partner always carrying – and managing – project funds. A new initiative, in partnership between the AHRC and Power to Change is also facilitating the development of community-led research initiatives and leadership. We will come back to these points in our recommendations for funders later.

## Clarifying personal commitments and institutional aims

**I**n some cases, moreover, finding common ground means moving beyond institutional identities and building trust that both parties are committed to achieving something for more than personal and instrumental benefits. This may not be a one-time activity as needs, tensions and demands may change certain circumstances and conditions. Re-visiting commitments and aims on the part of all parties gives greater clarification of what may be at stake in the partnership. As one community partner observed:

“Okay, I think with universities ... I think it's really helpful to know what they want to get out of it, why are they doing it and also what are they going to put into it. Because obviously sometimes universities would do a project and you really commit to it, and then you realise that actually at the end of it they [academics] move on to the next thing. Because actually there may be more of a career ladder kind of thing going on with some researchers, than the ideal which would be something that we're all committed to. You know well actually I'm doing this, I'm making this work because I have a strong political humanitarian belief in it. I think in a way what are you willing to do in this project, what are you willing to sacrifice for this project, how muddy are your boots?”

## Alienating institutional practices

**W**hat is perhaps equally important to note, however, are the factors that can destroy trust. Here, there are a number of structural and institutional issues that are particularly problematic given the experiences of racialised communities in the UK today.

### University buildings and spaces

First, university buildings and institutional practices, including the use of security guards, digital entrance cards and surveillance systems, can actively alienate individuals and groups whose experience of such systems has been of hostility:

“You have to have your meetings in spaces which are not swipe card, finger print, biometric, you know ... You know meetings at the MRC [...] they're terrifying for people who know that they are under suspicion in a hostile environment. So have them in a place which is more like you know Shoreditch Town Hall – the places people go to.”

While there is an increase in the monitoring of particular bodies in our current climate, we must be cognisant of the more long-standing perceptions of inaccessibility of universities and university spaces amongst some communities. For some, the university has always been a place that is not welcoming to them or to members of their community. In considering this, researchers from universities must think through how best to bring community members into the university – including possibly not bringing project partners onto university grounds, at all. If bridging that terrain and finding ways to overcome these experiences is important, then our case studies suggest being proactive: choose to hold meetings in familiar and accessible spaces; ensure that visitors are met and invited in to alien spaces; and show hospitality and welcome rather than hostility and distrust.

## Home Office requirements

A second significant obstacle to the creation of productive, equitable spaces for dialogue, is the use of universities by the Home Office to manage border control issues. In this context, as these surveillance features of the state become enfolded within university funding and documentation processes some project participants or community collaborators may feel that they are under the watchful eye of the government as they seek to enter collaboration.

Specifically, since 2006, universities have been required to secure evidence that anyone they are paying — for any activity — has the right to work in the UK. This usually involves showing a passport or formal documentation of the right to work, to the designated ‘authority’ in the university. This applies to professors doing external examinations as well as to lecturers on temporary contracts and so forth. In relation to collaborative research projects in over-zealous institutions, this requirement can also be applied to anyone being paid anything to participate in a research project. Communities approaching the university for the first time, perhaps being paid a small honorarium to cover lost time from their employment for participation, then, are often today greeted by a request to show a passport and demonstrate the right to work in the country. This is hardly conducive to building trust and collaboration, and unhelpfully intensifies the perception that the university is a state organisation that is hostile to communities.

Some universities handle this process better than others. Where community partners are able to hold the budget for an event and to cover participants’ costs, these rules can be handled more sensitively and respectfully. In other cases, university central teams are able to delegate ‘sign off’ on this activity to someone associated with the project and again, able to work respectfully and sensitively with participants. Notwithstanding this, the process of turning universities into border police evidently works against the development of productive collaborative partnerships with any individuals or groups who might have negative experiences of negotiating state bureaucracy. It is also worth noting that this requirement also militates against other areas of government policy — namely, the desire to increase the social impact of research.



**The process of turning universities into border police works against the development of productive collaborative partnerships with any individuals or groups who might have negative experiences of negotiating state bureaucracy.**



## Ethical procedures

A key insight from our case studies was that university ethical procedures are often not fit for purpose and can generate suspicion and mistrust between project participants and partners.

Legal documents, for example, have long been associated with moments and histories of cultural and material exploitation. Two projects discussed the issues of cultural exploitation associated with music and academic research, while another discussed the history of legal documents being used to justify land grabs and exploitation.

“We don’t all feel the same about signing bits of paper. And that goes from signing a contract with your gas board or signing up for a mobile phone – a lot of us now just click an X on a device – the signature is a fading form of consent. When you put a piece of paper in front of someone it’s now quite intimidating, especially when they’re going to contribute or divulge information. When asking for content from certain demographics, I also have to be sensitive to historical relationships with the state. Especially where pieces of paper and a signature have had negative implications. I totally understand the trepidation felt by some, having grown up in Birmingham in the 70s with the desire to be a musician. On the rare occasion a signature could be the elusive recording contract. But far more likely the piece of paper requiring your signature meant a brush with the law. This history comes to the fore every time a piece of paper is presented, as even for those fortunate to get the recording or publishing deal, the main experience has been negative. They’ve signed a piece of paper giving something away and got little or nothing in return. And that’s the reality at the core of this work, it’s about accepting they’ve learnt to be more in control of what they’re giving away. Not understanding this mind-set would mean I might get the interview, but fail to get the signature on the consent form.”

“My work does touch upon this ongoing debate regarding cultural appropriation ... so I had to tread really carefully, I felt that I was in this territory of ‘Oh have I done something wrong?’ by making use of these sounds from Indian instruments, but then we’ve talked about it a lot, whether this is appropriation, what are the respectful boundaries and ... it was a big departure for me personally because prior to this research project my work had borrowed cultural elements, but they’re very much on more a surface level. I went to Japan and recorded some instruments there, went home, made a piece ... and that was a very different approach, because I had no contact with the performers. It was like ‘capture and go’. And I refer to these types of sounds as ‘sonic souvenirs’ because it was very much a souvenir type collection activity. It’s an acquisition without full consideration of the source, history, context and significance. But this project was different.”

Operating legalistic, contractual ethical procedures that do not actively engage community partners, university partners and community participants in an active and ongoing dialogue, therefore, builds mistrust. This is well known within certain research traditions – such as anthropology – but in universities where ethical procedures are dominated by a medical/imperial/entitlement model, this can be poorly understood at institutional level:

“So you find that the research ethics for me as an anthropologist are then fundamentally at odds with the institutional protocols that I’m meant to be following. And that then means that as PI [Principal Investigator] I have to go and sit down with the institutional protocol makers and explain to them why their protocols are not supporting the research and try and make them accountable, so I think there’s a real accountability the other way round as well.”

In addition, if participants do not have English as a first language, asking them to sign documents that they cannot understand, even if explained via translation, produces deep anxiety.

As a result, all case study projects approached ethical issues with care and at least two of the projects that we spoke to were developing different approaches to ethical procedures that do not rely on written contract, and which are constantly negotiated with partners to ensure that working practices continue to respect all participants' rights. In so doing they are drawing on and contributing to the already significant efforts in the UK and internationally to develop ethical frameworks for collaborative research that respect the autonomy and sovereignty of community partners.<sup>15</sup> These issues, while universal, may need additional reflection depending on the community context, the type of work being considered and the role and shape of the university in the gathering of research on, as opposed to with, community partners.

## Summary: creating trust

**T**rust is essential to the creation of productive collaborations. Where projects have created trusted spaces for dialogue and trusting relationships they have employed some or all of the following approaches:

- They have worked with trusted mediators and brokers.
- They have operated with mutual respect for diverse sets of expertise and under principles of co-production of knowledge.
- They have enabled mediators and brokers to inform project teams about how best to collaborate with different communities and developed the project practices (including financial and practical arrangements) on the basis of this advice.
- They have created welcoming spaces for informal dialogue and addressed the issues that might prevent people from being able or comfortable to enter them, including considering remaining off university grounds.
- They have enabled explicit discussion about historical exploitative practices that persist based on stereotypes or prejudices and the limits of current institutional practices to address these.
- Project teams have a clear understanding of the personal and institutional aims and goals of all involved.
- University partners have found ways of explaining, distancing themselves from and working around the requirements to act as Home Office border police.
- Project teams have developed robust ethical procedures that are relevant to and sensitive to the experiences and interests of the partners that they are working with.
- Project teams have explored various funding options, including ways that the community partner may submit applications to applicable research funders.

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Banks, S. and Manners, P. (2012) *Community-based participatory research: a guide to ethical principles and practice*, Bristol: National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement.

Banks, S., et al. (2013) 'Everyday ethics in community-based participatory research' *Contemporary Social Science*, 8 (3): 263-277.

Brydon-Miller, M. (2008) 'Ethics and Action Research: Deepening our Commitment to Principles of Social Justice and Refining Systems of Democratic Practice' in P. Reason and H. Bradbury (eds.) *Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participatory Inquiry and Practice* New York: Sage.

# Finding mutual interest and common ground

# 8

Ideas and plans for collaboration were realised in many different ways in the projects we studied. They included: a group of skilled community researchers approaching a university academic with a specialism in the same area; two childhood friends working on their shared interests from community and academic perspectives; a committed academic/community actor spending over six years building up networks and working to secure funding and negotiating with many different partners; a local radio station taking a lead in setting an agenda for research and finding an academic ally and a funding opportunity to support this; two longstanding collaborators jointly developing projects and ideas together; a university outreach and engagement team seeking to make new connections with a local community; a film maker approaching a university with ideas; an academic and a community activist brought together in a research funding workshop; artists and activists finding a shared interest with an academic at a conference; an early career researcher introduced by a friend to a community worker; an academic, having secured funding, seeking to recruit collaborators.

Ideas for research, in other words, were developed variously in response to funding, despite the absence of funding, through a long-term dialogue and in insanely short timescales. It is impossible to generalise about how productive ideas are developed between partners. In many cases, these related to identifying areas of neglect and oversight in public understanding, public history or the academic literature; in others, in relation to developing a validation of powerful cultural activities through engagement with formalised academic research processes. What we can observe, however, is that projects were successful when they enabled all parties to identify common ground and mutual interests.

Consider, for example, the Intercultural Creativity project. This project, a collaboration between the internationally recognised Milapfest organisation (who specialise in Indian Arts) and an academic from Liverpool Hope University (who specialises in electroacoustic music) was driven, at the beginning, by seemingly very different interests. As the following vignette shows, however, the process of developing a common research agenda emerged as the partners came to learn about each other's practice:

The Intercultural Creativity partnership started with some relatively modest aims on both sides. In the academic's words, she was interested in working through the arts organisation to access the information (sound sources) that she wanted. She began thinking of Milapfest as the 'connection agency to put me in contact with these people [musicians]'. Together they needed to write a funding proposal, and the clarity of vision and mission of the community partner helped build a better understanding of both partners' needs. This strengthened the project 'that's when this project came into its own as we had to consider audiences for Milapfest and how would they gain through developing education projects associated with our collaboration. I think this area was particularly significant since one of Milapfest's aims is to reach out and promote Indian music education, and collaborating in this way would tick that box since we realised together that anything freely available to document all the instruments played on stage in their concerts would feed into this aim. At this point it started expanding and expanding' (academic partner). This moment during the development process came to stimulate a reflective discussion about what was of benefit to both partners and to generate the idea for the archive that was to form the basis of the project. Over time, the two participants came to approach the project from each other's perspective: 'During the project [academic partner] would be trying to think about what benefits were there for Milapfest and vice versa. We were looking after our own interests, but also thinking about their partner's interests made this collaboration work better. We had to learn about each other's art form and learn to respect it' (Milapfest partner). As a result of this process, the partners stopped identifying each other as 'academic' or 'community' partners, and instead began to see the partnership as a collaboration between artists. After a while, the partners began to learn about and take on each other's roles: 'In some cases I would try and do [academics] role because it just worked better for whatever reason. So then I learned to kind of [do the intro] which is why I had to understand electroacoustic music and what she was looking for. And we had some really interesting stories coming out of the research which could spawn bigger research projects in the future. One was which types of instruments and artist recorded more efficiently' (Milapfest partner). Over time this led to a blending of roles, to joint writing and to co-presenting at conferences leading to new ideas and new projects.

This partnership has now gone on to build an internationally recognised sound archive and demonstrates what is to be gained by developing partnerships around highly specialised areas of inquiry.

This question of finding mutual interest and common ground was a repeated feature of successful partnerships in the case studies. **Slave Trade Legacies**, for example, was driven by the shared passion of two childhood friends for Black History. **Imagine** was powered by two women's love of poetry and its capacity to open up new horizons for young women. **Khyal** was produced out of mutual interest in the partners' musical expertise and knowledge.

This is not always a straightforward process, however, and the case studies suggest that the development of ideas involves a process of negotiation from sometimes very different perspectives that come to be aligned together:

“I was asked to join that group [at the research sandpit] because it was broadly framed around outdoor space and safety ... and so obviously I thought racial harassment could work ... and then it kind of got configured differently. But I had a project in mind working with Nepalese elders who are very visible in this area, and I thought right there’s something going on there that we could try and develop. So the Nepalese elders were using outdoor spaces a lot more than most other community groups, so I wanted to get underneath that. The aim of the work is ... it’s multiple, so I had a very different aim to what the academics had. Very drastically different aim to that. So the academic aims were production of papers, reports. There was another partner involved [...] so they had policy outputs as normal. But I had a very clear idea of what I wanted to change and that was ... the social issues that were happening in Woolwich [...] you know the normal pathologizing [...] so I wanted a project with the Nepalese elders to find out what was going on in terms of why they would spend so much time outdoors. Because my hunch was it’s probably linked to housing – and the project showed that housing and other complex reasons were the reasons for using outdoor spaces.”

Ensuring that the ideas that are of concern and interest to all partners remain central to the project and that tensions between them can be negotiated to identify common ground, is why the safe and productive spaces for challenge and discussion, already discussed in Section 7, are so critical.

What may impact these negotiations may be the purportedly “innovative” aspects of funding mentioned in the above quotation: sandpits. Organised to bring people together to produce research ideas in a fixed period of time, these types of funding mechanisms may reduce the abilities of some community partners – and researchers – to work through the various issues that may impact Black and Minority Ethnic participation in university and community partnerships. In future, more will need to be done to recognise the difficulties of navigating, challenging, critiquing and negotiating that may need to talk place in order to identify common research interests and to enable inclusive, equitable and productive partnership building between universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities. We will return to this issue of funding mechanisms in a later section.

## Summary: Building common ground

**T** here is no simple recipe for the process of finding and identifying common ground and shared interests, but a number of factors seem to contribute:

- Time for individuals to get to know each other informally.
- Time and receptiveness for ideas to emerge organically.
- Capacity to manage conflict – internally and externally.
- Partners with a clear understanding of their own interests and expertise and the ability to see where these connect with others’ interests and expertise.
- Bid development processes with sufficient time to enable partners to really explore mutual interests and space to work through how best to navigate funding processes.
- Experience of working together on other projects and activities.
- Common backgrounds and shared experiences.
- Brokers able to facilitate dialogue and create networks and encounters.

# 9

## Navigating the funding landscape

**Collaborative research can, of course, happen without funding when the activities are in the mutual interest of all involved and when individuals and organisations have sufficient resource to facilitate collaboration and research as part of their core activities. For economically marginalised groups as well as for organisations dependent on limited resource, however, funding is essential.**

**F**unding bodies play a critical role, therefore, in shaping the landscape and possibilities for collaborative research. Their choice of topics and agendas, their specification of duration and type of fundable project, the forms of admissible costs, the types of partnerships that they support, all actively stimulate or militate against the potential of scholars, artists, activists and civil society organisations from Black and Minority Ethnic communities to develop their research agendas. They play a critical role in shaping the research landscape to reflect the richness and diversity of multiple experiences and expertise, including utilising their combined power, strategic direction and support to create new collaborative and research futures.

The projects in this report were supported by a wide range of funders including, in particular, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Arts Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Natural Environment Research Council, as well as by individual universities. In the main, Heritage Lottery and Arts Council projects tended to be initiated by community and cultural organisations, while AHRC and NERC projects were initiated by universities. Some of these funders were also experimenting for the first time with university-community collaboration and learning from the process. These included: the NERC funding that supported the **Photovoice** project; the Arts Council England funding that supported **The Bigger Picture** partnership; and the collaboration between AHRC and HLF that underpinned the First World War Heritage Hubs with their small-scale community research grants for 'Hidden Histories' that supported both **Minding Black Histories** and **In Flux**.

Our case studies and workshops give a number of key insights into the way in which these funding processes are navigated by those seeking to build research activities, and how they both enable and work to prevent Black and Minority Ethnic communities securing appropriate funding/investment.



**Funding organisations' choice of topics and agendas, and specifications around project duration, admissible costs and types of partnership, all actively stimulate or militate against the potential of Black and Minority Ethnic communities to develop their research agendas.**



## Getting the bid together

**F**unding development happens through two processes:

1. Open mode (where applicants can approach a funder with an idea that they have generated themselves)
2. Thematic mode (where applicants are responding to a funding call).

These have different names depending on the funder concerned, but the principle is the same: there are funding calls where topics are allocated and open funding opportunities where ideas come from the groups developing the proposals. Unofficially, there are also ways in which potential grant holders and funding bodies have discussions about how different ideas might fit with thematic priorities, which then shapes the process of applying for funding. For some funders, university partners are necessary and need to take the lead (e.g. all research council funding applications) with community groups or organisations encouraged as partners or not mentioned in the funding. Reciprocally, with other funders community partners or creative organisations are necessary and need to take the lead (Heritage Lottery Fund/Arts Council), with university partners then encouraged as partners or not mentioned in the funding call.

Research itself as a distinctive activity can be funded under a range of funding bodies – it is the explicit aim in the case of UKRI funding. In other cases, for example, Arts Council funding, it may be a focus of a specific call or a sub-element of other funding activities. Research is explicitly not the focus of Heritage Lottery Funding, although many partnerships between communities and universities are funded in this way – which raises the interesting question of what these groups count as ‘research’. Indeed, it is clear that many community organisations are fundamentally not motivated by doing ‘research’, but by producing knowledge or action that will lead to social change. A critical factor shaping the involvement of communities in collaborative research, then, is whether they identify their interests and activities with the idea of research at all and whether they therefore see what they are doing as eligible for what is usually defined as ‘research funding’.

Setting aside this longer conversation about what counts as research, the case studies and workshops, however, provide a series of insights into the process of navigating initial funding processes to secure resource for their activities.



**What is clear is the importance of community partners being able to influence and shape the project and its objectives from the outset rather than being involved at a relatively late date when objectives have already been set.**



As we have already discussed, ideas for collaboration emerged in very different ways, which means that projects approached the funding process in very different ways. In some cases, partners had been working together for a long time and were simply looking for opportunities to continue their work; in others, it was the funding call or opportunity itself that stimulated the collaboration and the invitation of partners to collaborate. In all cases, however, questions of language; allocation of resources; and fit to funder expectations all shaped the development of the idea into a fundable project, which then shaped what the partners were subsequently able to achieve. It is in these processes that important negotiations between partners take place that impact fundamentally on relations of trust between the parties and on whether the research activity is able to meet the needs and interests of all concerned. What is clear is the importance of community partners being able to influence and shape the project and its objectives from the outset rather than being involved at a relatively late date when objectives have already been set. Early involvement of partners can better inform projects in terms of what is achievable and what will be beneficial to all involved. This is clearly of particular significance for the future development of research around themes and issues relevant to Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

## Specialised expertise, language and networks

**A**ll funding processes are specialised and require specialised language, skills and knowledge about funding expectations and processes; although some funders are significantly better than others at enabling potential applicants to understand these expectations and processes. Some groups and organisations are able to build up specialist knowledge that helps them to navigate the funding landscape. Many universities, particularly research-intensive universities, have highly skilled specialists with strong connections to funding bodies. Others have research centres that have built up knowledge and networks in relation to a particular area that gives them a track record and allows them to approach funders with ideas. As one academic observes, this is critical in helping to develop strong proposals:

*“It was a learning curve for me because I’ve never done such a lengthy application before. I luckily had input from one of my colleagues and she was more of an expert in AHRC funding, so she was wonderful. She was more of a sort of... you know, ‘Do this, say that’ and proof read... so I had help, academic help, yeah and of course from [community partner].”*

The clustering of research expertise within certain spaces may reinforce structural inequalities that make it harder for communities or academics working in non-research-intensive universities to access research funding. Given that BME academics and students are more likely to be working or studying in non-research-intensive universities in the UK, this process of specialisation produces a barrier to gaining research funding amongst both BME academics and communities.

What we do not know from our research, however, is whether and where community infrastructure or national bodies are developing expertise in funding development that could specifically support BME communities. It is not clear to us that this capacity exists.

Short notice funding calls also militate against communities without specialist research funding expertise as they do not allow time for groups to become aware of the opportunity and to build partnerships and networks that will allow them to be successful in making applications.

The requirement for specialist knowledge of funding processes was essential to project development in our case studies:

“[It’s] almost translating what it is that I want to do, or what it is the community wants to do in terms they’ll understand.”

“What was difficult I think initially was getting right the application in their [Heritage Lottery Fund] terms, getting the application right for HLF funding to be released was actually quite a difficult thing. But I found HLF extremely helpful, because once I’d got the first thing in and I was given a field worker, he was amazing you know, set up meetings with me and went through the whole thing carefully and talked about HLF speak etc.”

The language of the funding call also played an important role in shaping whether all partners involved in developing the proposal were able to understand what was being proposed or not:

“[The funding process] wasn’t that clear for me. I mean ... because it’s the academics that led and the funding proposal is very academic, so it’s not like a funding proposal that an NGO would do, you know here’s the output we’re going to achieve, and these are the outcomes that hopefully would link – it wasn’t framed like that at all. [It was difficult to engage] in the language that was used [...] I have to reread the bid about 17 times to really understand it, when I’ve got a caseload to work on.”

“They wrote the bid and I remember we saw it. I did provide some academic insight into you know my role [...] But predominantly it was [the community partner] they very much had a clear idea of what they wanted to do when they spoke to me and [academic partner]. In other instances it was the other way round – I would have to write the bid and then the community would have to sign it off.”

This process of specialisation in bid development, in which partners need to trust each other to write applications in the language most likely to secure funder support, is a critical moment in which projects succeed or fail. Notably, the funding process makes a number of assumptions about the expertise of those wanting to develop research. As one community partner observes:

“We’re very organised ... I worry about groups that aren’t that well organised ... especially new and emerging groups which can’t hit the ground running like some of the established race equality groups. And with a strong sense of politics ... I worry that this is open to those who know how to play the game will end up getting the funding. And it’s also very middle class, so everything’s done written, in the written word ... emails ... and nothing’s done by conversations.”

When proposals are put together at short notice, with limited input from either party, without the very different sets of expertise about how to work with different communities that is required, then projects can be set to fail or produce disappointment. Short funding timescales with a rapid turnaround time, in particular, militate against the development of robust and successful proposals.

“You have to absolutely know your potential partners before you begin. Getting to know your partners during a research project is extremely hazardous, or can be hazardous, it could mean that one person ends up doing all the work – very likely, that has happened. You have to know your partners, you really have to do that and be sure you are talking the same language before you start.”

This, however, is usually a key learning point for collaborators who, should the relationship survive, agree in subsequent collaborations to work more slowly and transparently at the bid development stage.

Where trusting long-term relationships are in place, this process of specialisation in the bid development stage was seen as beneficial and just part of the division of labour on a project that is seen as deeply co-developed by both partners. In these cases, the challenges of negotiating and navigating the funding landscape were jointly held:

“I was involved in relation to drawing up the budgets, so I knew how much it would cost to do a piece of work like this. And also I was involved in determining what the outputs would look like. [Academic partner] was involved in doing the stuff that I couldn't even imagine how to organise, such as how to divide up the budget in terms of the percentage that goes to the university, administrative costs, writing, other things that you have to do when you're trying to get money into a university. I wouldn't have even known how to begin to do that. The active practical dissemination and delivery of the work, I was able to do that bit. So it was actually a joint bid.”

These longstanding relationships also mean that when short notice opportunities for funding do come up, the networks and trust are in place to develop proposals. Such longstanding relationships can also enable academics to address some of the structural inequalities that many community groups might be facing by providing the time and specialist expertise required for bid development:

“The idea of involving the partners at a point in time has kind of dissolved now for us because we've been working with all of these partners for such a long time. The nuts and bolts of how we did it, I was picking up the phone to partners at CCA [Centre for Contemporary Arts], at the Refugee Council, at BEMIS [Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland], at the Islamic University of Gaza, the National Dance Theatre ... I mean all the different places where I knew I was working with partners and I'd say 'Look we've got a deadline, we've only got three weeks, are you interested in being on board? You may or may not be, we've really not got much time, so you're going to have to let me do a lot of the heavy lifting for you.' So it's because we're working with incredibly cash strapped organisations, you know we're not working with organisations who can afford to collaborate. I needed to do a lot of the writing – because I speak AHRC speak. And because none of my partners speak AHRC speak, needs to speak AHRC speak, want to speak AHRC speak, it's not going to help them at all ... but they do know and trust that collaborations with us are a good thing.”



**Short notice funding calls also militate against communities without specialist research funding expertise as they do not allow time for groups to become aware of the opportunity and to build partnerships and networks.**



## Allocating money in bid development

**A** core issue in these projects relates to how finance is allocated and to whom for what work. In research council-funded projects, the issue of how overheads were allocated to projects and the implications that this had for collaborations and trust between partners, were significant. In application forms for research council funding, for example, university partners are expected to allocate significant sums for university overheads and indirect costs that are then included in the total cost of the project. These can amount to significant figures and often means that funding in a joint collaboration is skewed significantly towards the university partner. This can cause significant distrust in collaboration with partners. As one academic observes:

“By the time you have to put in a certain amount of my time and a certain amount of Co-investigator’s time and you know the institutional on-costs, so the overheads, the estates – that took a wedge of money. Which was kind of frustrating because it really cut down the amount of money that was available to actually do the work, you know the kind of on the ground stuff.”

From the community partner side, this seems disproportionate, particularly when (with some funders) they themselves are not eligible to include their core costs. Over time, more experienced partners learn to include such costings in their day rates, but this can be an expensive mistake for newer organisations learning to work with universities and can negatively impact the collaboration. As one academic observed:

“They [the voluntary sector] need the foundation funding that allows projects to work on top of it. They are losing that. In some ways the universities don’t have that problem – we do have the core funding. So we should view that again as a position of privilege that allows us to support the voluntary sector.”

At the costing stage there are also problems with building in costs that are actually required to do the research successfully, particularly with economically and socially marginalised communities. As one community partner observed:

“You can’t say oh we’re going to do a project in which I’m going to spend... you know I’ll budget in five meals with an Iranian guy and three hours of teaching English when he comes round or whatever [...] I would think that that doesn’t fall within the services if you like that we really provide.”

And yet, as discussed in Section 7, the processes of creating safe welcoming spaces, of creating positive conditions for dialogue, may be central to some of the research in this field. Recognising and allowing these costs is therefore essential to the conduct of the research. Some academics, however, report real frustrations in getting these sorts of costs through university finance teams or funding bodies:

“The main frustration for me was getting the university to recognise that it was a proper collaboration. But we’ve had real problems with getting through to the finance team that it was actually a partnership and you had to fund them large amounts of money. The money coming back into the university wasn’t as much as they would have hoped, because you know it was a tiny bit of my time and paying a tiny bit of Co-investigator time – that’s not the normal pattern for those kinds of projects. I also had to then justify, slightly ironically, to the AHRC about why so much of the money was going to an external partner.”

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The way that money is allocated on projects is not simply a technical issue. It is a materially important means of recognising the value and knowledge and expertise of partners.  
\*

“Where we battled, where we had problems was, for example, I was insistent that at the opening night [of the exhibition] which was the lecture [...] that we had Caribbean food. And there was a whole thing about having to use the caterers that the university has because of course all of these things are privatised aren't they? And then doing the battle to actually have Caribbean caterers. I managed it.”

“I had to clearly list what I needed, such as a breakdown of costs, and on the one piece of feedback I did get it said the project partners look like they're taking more percentage of the actual funding. And there's no documentation anywhere about what's the fair share.”

The way that money is allocated on projects is not simply a technical issue, whether academic or community knowledge is funded is not simply a matter of numbers on a funding form. It is a materially important means of recognising the value and knowledge and expertise of partners, both within the project team and as participants in the research process. Significantly, this is something that is not simply solved by dividing up fees and costs because the question of who can hold funds, to what limit and for what purposes is often subject to regulation from funders. Given the precarity of Black and Minority Ethnic community organisations — and the significant number of Black and Minority Ethnic academics at lower and less secure levels of employment within UK universities — ensuring equitable funding must be a priority within a landscape of resource scarcity. As one of our academic interviewees observed:

“Well I suppose the first message would be find the money for the community partners ... it's absolutely essential in all cases, but especially when they are helping us resolve our problems, our challenges, our inadequacies of dealing with some of these structural racism issues. So we're just doubling down on the damage we've done to them if we're exploiting them and getting them to do the learning for us. So if you're not willing to pay partners, then just go pick up a book and figure it out yourself. So I think there's a real obligation to get the funding.”

Reciprocally, one of the cultural organisations interviewed observed:

“It would be better to understand more the value of partners, what funders are getting from the partners. Especially because arts organisations for example, are working in practice with real people and they're having an impact on peoples' lives all the time. So I think that's important that your partnership funding is getting that contribution, but it should be acknowledged.”

Fundamentally, however, the funding matters because if it isn't right at the development stage, given the deep commitment that these project teams have to the people they are working with, then often they will take on the additional costs needed to ensure that the research is conducted appropriately and respectfully with participants. Such costs are taken from individuals' own pockets (we heard examples of this from both academics and from community partners) or from the core activities of the community organisations. The consequence of this is that, counter-intuitively, funding can leave organisations and individuals in a more financially precarious position than at the beginning of the process. When working with already under-funded organisations, in a sector that is profoundly under-resourced as is the case with Black and Minority Ethnic culture, creativity, arts and heritage, this is a deeply unethical basis upon which to fund and conduct research.

## Additional barriers and issues faced by BME communities in accessing funding

There are three main issues emerging from our case studies in relation to the specific challenges faced by BME applicants in developing proposals: first, self-censoring in the application process; second, the demand on groups to be 'diverse' and 'representative' of multiple communities; and third, the additional demands for advocacy and advice required of BME researchers and community organisations by funders.

### Self-censorship amongst applicants/ inequalities in funding available

First, a number of interviewees reported feeling the need to self-censor what they would propose in a project in the expectation that funders would not appreciate more 'radical' proposals or projects that addressed specific issues of racism or experiences of being Black in the UK today.

One interviewee from a cultural arts organisation reported a perception of racial bias in the funding process, suggesting that Black-led projects would not receive high levels of funding from national funding bodies. We cannot verify these assertions in relation to funding, but what is clear is that the data available in the public sphere in relation to applications and awards to different communities and on different topics is currently insufficient to begin to monitor and assess whether this is the case. In itself, this is not a satisfactory situation. Moreover, only 8% of trustees of charitable organisations are non-white<sup>16</sup> which does not build confidence in the capacity of trusts and foundations to recognise and understand proposals that emerge from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

The implication of this expectation, however, was that this group consistently bid for smaller funding amounts. This practice was confirmed by a leading Black academic we interviewed, who argued that there was a critical issue at the bid development stage relating to the scale and sustainability of projects being developed by Black Arts organisations. They suggested, for example, that there was a vicious cycle of under-recognition and under-funding of research in the Black Arts precisely because communities were applying for small scale funding which did not enable them to build more substantial infrastructure.

"The community are applying for bids anything up to about £12k or £15k, which is a short-term project... Historically I've bid for up to £1.5million ... because I recognised what needs to be invested to move the landscape into a better place ... part of the vicious circle is, if you only ever get funded for small projects, you're never seen as capable of managing a big project, which means you can't scale up. And it's the inability to upscale that means... 50 years into the presence of Black music in Britain, it's still considered other and small. There is no infrastructure in terms of buildings, there's no legacy of professionals attached to the music outside of performance, in the arts, you don't see heads of business, CEOs, senior academics for Black British music are a rarity, you don't see loads of books written about this process as British — it's just a vacuum. Given this contribution falls within the arts, the Arts Council has to be seen as contributory component of this perpetual cycle of you're 'other', you're a minority and the idea that this cultural contribution is smaller than it actually is."

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Young Trustees Guide: Developing the Next Generation of Charity Leaders, Charities Aid Foundation (2015) [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/YoungTrusteesReport\\_1682A\\_WEB\\_080915.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/YoungTrusteesReport_1682A_WEB_080915.pdf)

The implications of this, as a different community partner observed, are substantial. Namely, that there is limited long term institutional research capacity being built in BME communities through these small-scale collaborative research activities. As such, every project must start all over again in building the links and the infrastructure needed to produce outputs, performances, research and knowledge. More widely, BME communities are trapped into a scale of operations that is fraught and fragile. In all instances the scale of the challenges and terrain of neglect, to be addressed are so vast that many BME groups over-stretch themselves to make significant interventions.

### Funders' demands for 'representation' and 'diversity'

In addition to this concern about the scale of proposals, four of our interviewees raised the issue that in the process of project development they were being asked to work outside the interests and expertise of their communities and take on research roles that were more 'representative' of all BME communities. Here, they were finding that the discourse of 'diversity' and 'inclusion' was placing additional demands upon them as community organisations and researchers that might not be faced by white organisations and researchers. As one community partner observed:

"People were sort of telling us off for only focusing on Black African communities or Black Caribbean communities. When really I don't think people do see that you have to have a different set of skills to access those different communities properly."

Others argued:

"The other thing I think which often comes up is who is Black and who is the representative. And yet it is not an issue if a white organisation or white people come up with an idea, then you know you're not saying 'Are you representative of all white people?' It's just a given, whereas, if it's a Black organisation or Black individuals coming up with something, it's you know 'What makes you the representative? Who are you? And why should we fund you and not so and so?'"

"There's something about the ethnicities issue, quite often people feel constrained in terms of a narrow focus on a particular ethnicity or ethnic group because you know 'what is BME, okay. And the pressure seems to be that if you just call it BME that would work, that would satisfy funders and so on. The difficulties come when you have to justify focusing on a particular group. So it's not in a way that people haven't thought it through, it's that they have tried to second guess what's going to make it possible for the funding to actually happen. So again I think funders need to take some responsibility in terms of allowing a little bit more flexibility. They [applicants for funding] would feel much more committed if they were allowed to follow through their idea or felt they could. You know a lot of funders might have been hesitant about focusing on an African Caribbean group – why not make it bigger, because then they can say 'diverse', which could mean anything of course."

"And they [officials] kind of cluster all BME people together, because South Asian, Indian, Pakistani, and you say no, no. This is because the Indian community in [...] is professional doctors and people like that who came here first. While the Pakistani community was working in manual work. So there was that class difference."

This discourse of 'representativeness' and 'diversity' has a number of effects:

First, it disallows the rights of communities to inquire into and produce their own knowledge of utility and importance to that community. In so doing it fails to recognise that the current research landscape has such significant gaps relating to BME communities and histories that an intervention and study in one community often needs to start from a very limited evidence and archival base and merits full and substantial attention.

Second, it creates an equivalence between different communities, suggesting an inter-changeability of relationships, knowledge and insights that is, fundamentally, racist. Skills and interest in another community simply will not be enough to make a project work. Often implicit in the demand for representation is an undermining of the skills and knowledge that is intrinsic to individuals from diverse backgrounds. As one community partner observed:

"When we started the [...] project, we wanted to go across all of the different minority groups, but we realised that we didn't actually possibly have the skills or the knowledge or the capacity to access all of those communities. Because I'm of mixed heritage – Black African, and [collaborator] is Caribbean, so we felt that it was probably better for us to access those communities [...] We used to work with a woman and she did a lot of work with the Somali community and this was for a different research project. But I think working with her we realised how easy it was for her to speak to the Somali community, and it was harder for us because we didn't have that relationship there."

Third, it militates against the distinctive scholarly and artistic knowledge of BME researchers and communities by privileging race and ethnicity above the substantive focus of the research which may be into one particular artistic technique, tradition or history. As one academic observes:

"What's been really important for my artists in residence is that they are artists – that's what they are. The fact that they might be Black or Commonwealth or Global South or New Scots, or any of that, actually is utterly secondary."

Under these circumstances, the reported demand for diverse 'representation' risks acting as an important impediment to Black and Minority Ethnic community partners getting involved in partnerships and exploring the full breadth of research topics and themes.

However, one project did report the importance of acknowledging and being clear about which communities were and weren't involved in projects from the beginning, and not over-claiming for the nature of the stories that were being told:

"When we'd announced that we were going ahead and we got some funding, it became quite clear quite soon that there was a particular group of people that were really unhappy. I think they saw it as, either they'd been pipped to the post, or that it was a money earning thing. And so those people, some of them didn't agree to be interviewed. I think it was biased towards the South Asian community, there's no doubt about that I don't think, from my point of view. When we put the exhibition up [...] there was feedback from some people saying 'Where are the Afro Caribbeans? There's no mention of us.' So that reminded me that it was unbalanced, actually the exhibition we put up...was really more focused on bhangra, but they were right to notice that."

“I think that was always part of it, you know you do any kind of project like that – you make a selection. And I think I was very clear in saying from the beginning this is not representative, it can't be, because for a start we're coming in with a very clear agenda of what we want to research. So, it's not going to be representative of everybody in [this area] or even the majority of people there really. I tried to get a spread across communities, but again I don't think we really did that, I think it was maybe representative of certain bits of the history.”

The implications of this tension between specific histories and the demand for representation is not, however, to demand all projects speak for all communities, but to either ensure that projects are clear about their focus and remit and/or to ensure that the scale of funding is commensurate with the challenges required to conduct the sort of in-depth and wide-ranging research needed to enable projects to take account of different experiences. It is also to remind funders that diversity is not a package and Black and Minority Ethnic communities cannot be substituted one for another.

### The additional burdens of advocacy and leadership

When the occasional BME leader is identified by white mainstream institutions they risk being exploited as brokers to provide access to communities and used as symbols of the institution's equality credentials. There were two examples in our interviews of BME applicants being asked to take on additional advocacy and advice roles for funders on a voluntary basis, to increase applications and application success of BME groups to their funding schemes. One small community organisation, for example, talked about how one funder had asked them to take on an active role (with no additional funding) supporting other BME community organisations in their bidding to that funder, implying it was a necessary consequence of having received a grant. Another individual, who was unsuccessful in gaining funding from two major national organisations for example, was nonetheless finding that their name was being put forward by these funders to other people as someone who would provide advice to individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic communities on how to navigate funding systems.

Why it should be accepted that individuals in precarious community organisations or in marginal positions in universities, should take on the responsibility of advocacy, advice and leadership in relation to access to funding for BME communities on behalf of large funding organisations, rather than these organisations suitably staffing such roles internally, is not entirely clear. What this suggests is that funders may need to revisit their own support, mentoring and development schemes – and resist the temptation to overburden community organisations or academics with additional advocacy work.

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## Summary: funding issues

In our analysis of the ways that projects navigate the funding landscape a number of important factors became clear:

- Structural inequalities are embedded early on in the funding process, as specialist centres of expertise and knowledge privilege those in white majority institutions.
- Short notice funding calls privilege those with existing networks and expertise.
- The availability of local funding officers able to translate funder speak on the ground was useful for demystifying funding processes and supporting access to funding.
- The specialised language required in funding processes can militate against productive collaborations unless efforts are made to ensure transparency in the bid development process.
- Long term relationships and networks between universities and community organisations can help to mitigate some of the structural inequalities in funding processes.
- Community partners need to be allowed to include overhead and staff costs in funding proposals to ensure that projects do not negatively impact their long-term viability.
- The day to day practical costs of building trust and relationships with communities with limited experience or trust in the research process need to be included in funding proposals.
- There is the perception of racial bias in funding allocations and self-censorship in bid development amongst some funding applicants from BME communities.
- There is under-investment in large scale, Black-led awards which means that sustainable institutional and infrastructural capacity is not being built.
- The demand for 'representative' research and 'diversity' can work against BME communities being able to develop relevant research projects.
- BME individuals and groups report being asked to take on additional roles as advocates, leaders and advisors on behalf of funders, with no financial recompense.

10

Running  
projects  
successfully

The 19 case studies we are reporting on here all managed to secure sufficient funding to develop their collaborations – although not necessarily without sacrifices, struggle or possible periods of non-funding. What does it take, however, to make these partnerships run successfully?

We have already discussed the importance of knowledgeable brokers and mediators, of respect for different forms of knowledge, of appropriate ethical procedures and bid development processes, and the ways that these shape the development and early stages of a project. Here we talk more precisely about how projects, once they are running, achieve their aims. What does it take to ensure that teams of collaborators, sometimes from very different backgrounds, work well together; what does it take to ensure that community participants' views can be voiced, are heard and respected; what does it take to make sure projects survive the transition from the theory to the practical realities of conducting research in real life situations?

## Communication and relationship building

Central to project success is an explicit acknowledgement that historical, social and cultural factors influence to varying degrees the perspectives that are adopted and that form the starting point for engagement. In the face of often challenging societal and structural inequalities, communication must be foregrounded. Ensuring that there is an explicit declaration of the value of learning from each other not predicated on racial power relations (individual and institutional) is essential to create greater opportunities for open and multi-perspective conversations that give for time to develop mutual agreement. These approaches to communication, premised on principles of respect and transparency, are essential to building strong relationships between individuals from different backgrounds, institutional positions and life experiences. As a number of our interviewees commented:

“Teamwork, everybody talking to each other and regular face-to-face meetings are also important. Trust is important, respecting individual expertise and recognising the constraints that partners work under.”

“It goes back to the relationship building of really understanding each other, because I don't think academics... most academics haven't worked in the voluntary sector or the private sector or the public sector... it's not a flexible workspace it's deliverable outputs and... you know it's busy, it's really really busy.”

“It's transparency really [...] absolutely [...] We talked about it, we were enthused by it, excited by the collaboration – at every level, we communicated, you know what I mean about what is it that we want to do. Whether that's in terms of the operational side or the structure of the project, the delivery of the project, you know to acknowledgement – ‘Are you happy with this?’ all that you know. And then the sharing of images and accreditation – everything from top to bottom was like that. So that's kind of why we had a really excellent experience.”

## Recognising expertise

**B**uilding these partnerships required above all the capacity of university and community partners to listen, admit a lack of expertise in different areas, to recognise and respect each other's specialist forms of knowledge and experience and to learn from each other.

“What I rate actually more deeply is for organisations to recognise that we can be a trusted partner and to recognise that we were a partner that was willing to learn from them and evolve.”

“We very very quickly realised that when you're dealing with a specific community, so you're not just doing generic community research, you're focused on a community, the academic staff are not the experts, they are in no way the experts – the expertise lies in the community. And actually I would say I probably learnt more from [community partner] than she learnt from me, I would say that.”

## Having difficult conversations

**A**t times, relationships can be tested – either by the ongoing difficulties familiar to any project or by differences of opinion and understanding between project teams. As one project observed, doing collaborative research is at times a fraught process:

“It comes from the fact that people doing a research project together is incredibly... you know, it's like being married to somebody, it's a very intimate relationship, you really have to trust each other and that you're going to pull your weight. And when that doesn't happen, then it creates enormous resentments and problems... but those are the kind of personnel problems you get everywhere.”

While difficulties were not always discussed within projects (and in one case, the first time that problems were discussed was in our interview), successful teams talked about how they created spaces to have difficult, open and frank conversations:

“That was the hard work of relationship building, that you can't put your finger on 'Oh you know we did this and then everything was all right'. We had to say whatever happens we're in this project, we're going to have to do the work, do the hard work of you know... to have difficult conversations sometimes, challenge each other, be honest with each other, how we're feeling about certain things, but keep our eye on the tasks and what we want to achieve through the project.”

Where both partners were committed to these conversations and to working together to address the aims of the project, these challenging discussions led to mutual respect and much more productive and intense working relationships:

“Do you know something, I have to say... I have to give it to [academic partner] in particular – she put up with a lot of challenges and she always just took it on the chin, got on with the job. Yeah, I have to give it to her – she put the work in, she put the relationship building work in, and she took some things that a lot of academics or people who work in large white institutions would have found hard to take.”

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Building these partnerships required the capacity to listen, admit a lack of expertise in different areas, to recognise and respect each other's specialist forms of knowledge and experience and to learn from each other.  
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One project talked about how friendship had flourished between them as collaborators as the project developed. This friendship relation enabled the project participants to work through difficulties when they arose:

“We didn’t work well right from the start, you know like [...] it took us a while to get going with the project, cos we didn’t really understand what to do together. You know like we said, there were times we couldn’t get the instrument players, the musicians, at the right time. But once we developed that trust that’s why we didn’t need to worry about that part of who does what, because it just became natural. And I think definitely friendship helped, mutual trust helped. And then like I have been with other collaborations in other organisations, I didn’t have to worry that she was taking advantage of us.”

Such collaborations led to ongoing dialogue beyond the confines of the project:

“The working relationship has kind of extended beyond the life of the project, so we’ve written pieces together after the project. So it has felt like a real proper collaboration, although we’ve never actively said that that’s what we were doing.”

## Appropriate methods to build relationships with community participants

**R**elationships need to be built not just between project teams, but between project teams and community participants. In these cases, and where communities might be vulnerable or cautious of engaging with research, significant effort needs to be expended to build relationships. One project, working with young refugees, for example, involved a sustained period of trust building and relationship building as a core part of the project:

“It was over one academic year with my students, so we looked at the initial stages of everybody who was in that small team having some time to actually get to know the young people. Members of the team came into my classroom, sometimes they did workshops, sometimes we went out and they came with us. So for me that was really crucial because it was about building up those relationships. Because in my experience young people will trust me to bring the people into the classroom that they can feel safe with, but that doesn’t mean that those people don’t have to also establish their own relationships.”



**Relationships need to be built not just between project teams, but between project teams and community participants. In these cases, and where communities might be vulnerable or cautious of engaging with research, significant effort needs to be expended to build relationships.**



Another working with schools needed to overcome significant distrust amongst white participants about a project on Black History in education, which they achieved through careful communication and through partnership with respected mediating organisations:

“We had real problems getting in to [...] schools, because they’re so much more sensitive around the race stuff, because obviously the Stephen Lawrence tragedy and all that. And I think their assumption is always that we will assume that they’re racist. I think often some of the institutions thought that we would be much more hardline than we actually were, we would turn up – Asian woman, Black woman turning up at a school, you know all the people we spoke to were all white. There was a certain amount of ... I don’t know, not suspicion but kind of you know nervousness I think. After we kind of explained what we were doing then I think that a lot of that dissipated and the teachers were really into it. And [mediating organisation’s] reputation was absolutely crucial to that, because it has that reputation for being an organisation that people can work with. There was just no way we could have done that work without working with [mediating organisation] just absolutely no way.”

Others had to think carefully about what benefits there were for nationally and internationally recognised artists to participate, who may have previously been suspicious about processes of academic cultural appropriation:

“This project was different, I was having face-to-face contact, I was having conversations with each performer, I was making sure that they knew what they were contributing to. We went through a process of asking them if they wanted to contribute. And then if they did, what would they gain – they would gain publicity on the website, they would encourage interest and education about their instrument and they were doing events simultaneously through [...] with payment. There was official respect on those lines ... and they could always say no, and some did say no to me. And some gave little, some gave more.”

## Working in multiple languages

**A** key requirement for many projects was to look carefully at the role played by language and other forms of communication in the research process, and there was a need for academic partners to show a degree of linguistic sensitivity and challenge any assumption that English might suffice in the research process. While not always required, in partnerships where community participants did not have English as their first language, for example, project teams sometimes decentred English as the first language, working instead in community languages first and only resorting to English as a last resort. In one project, all academic and community project participants worked in Nepali:

“The good thing is that all members in the research team, including Principal Investigator and Co-investigator, could communicate in Nepali. That’s the good thing. All members of CNSUK, had no problem at all – their native or main language was Nepali. And some other members could speak sub-ethnic language such as Limbu. We designed questionnaire in Nepali, we collected data in Nepali ... though we had a questionnaire in English as well. We did piloting. The questionnaire was administered in Nepali, so that means people could clearly say whatever they wanted, and later translations were made into English.”

In other examples, high quality technical translation was required that was specific to particular language traditions and topics:

“Overseas Chinese students volunteering did not speak dialects like those of Hakka so it was good that there were people from the Chinese community who could speak this and stepped in to help. This is an important consideration when doing this kind of work.”

“A lot of migrant groups can speak English reasonably well, or are learning to speak ...but the Nepalese community came as pensioners, so they’ve really struggled learning English. Because of the barracks in Woolwich, it’s the Gurkha community ...just to give you a context. So community language, you need the right translation and the translator needs to be fully aware of who and what they are, or aren’t, representing. So you’ve got an issue which needs to be really carefully managed.”

On the basis of these observations, it is clear that resource should be provided for translation and interpreting when required, and the team should include members with appropriate linguistic competence. Working with the multilingual communities in the UK, deploying English only can be a barrier to the success of research.

## Using creative and arts based methods

**A**t other times, project teams de-centred written and verbal language completely and instead prioritised visual and image based methodologies in order to ensure that the insights and knowledge of all participants, particularly those less confident in the use of language to communicate, could be gathered.

Photography and film-making were frequently used in projects to enable participants to capture, document and analyse particular phenomena – whether this is oral histories or contemporary lived experiences. In other cases, creative writing, theatre, poetry and playful approaches to language alongside visual making would enable participants to powerfully analyse contemporary society – from the life experiences of Asian girls growing up in Rotherham, to the narratives of new migrants crossing Europe from Syria, to the day-to-day experiences of settled refugees in the UK living with no recourse to public funds.

“The girls were comfortable doing the art work rather than the poetry because their language skills weren’t at that level, so it’s just adapting the project.”

“And so one of the themes of the work that I do is about identity and what does it mean to be a young person from Afghanistan for example who has been a brother and a son and perhaps you know a very good student, or perhaps somebody who worked in a market with their father and then they come here and then there’s a whole new identity. And so part of this project was about looking at you know how creative arts allow this group of young people to express some of those things, and can we actually measure that...and is it important to measure it, is the other question.”

“And also visual methods, that’s why I went for photography that um...how even can I as somebody, a person of colour, represent the Nepalese community? – I can’t. So that’s why I really wanted visual methods so at least they could own the research through their lens, through their framing, through their perspectives, and then it’s projected on a photograph, so it’s not projected by me.”

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\*

“So me and [the other ambassador] were looking for creative qualitative methods that would engage people from all walks of life maybe who don't all speak English [...] as soon as you mention 'research' to people, people are kind of like 'Oh I don't really want to do it, cos it's probably going to just take loads of my time and I'm not going to enjoy it'. So we sat down and spoke to [academic advisor] at Bristol University, she actually specialises in looking at sort of different ways of getting data from things. And she spoke to us about a project that she'd done using something called Photovoice, and we got really excited about it because it is using photography, and photography's really easy – anyone can take a picture, it didn't have to be a professional photographer. The way she explained it, it allowed people to just sort of actively go into their community and show you an answer to a question without necessarily having to speak about it or write it down. So we wanted to go ahead with it, because it seemed quite perfect.”

Arts-based methods were not simply dissemination and communication tools. However, they were also artistic practices in their own right that enabled new ways of knowing to be introduced to projects.

“From the project there are some absolutely powerful and evocative images... what we need to do is we need to go back in to those photographs and get some thoughts and commentary about them to actually give them voice. Because you know an image is very very powerful... and they're very emotive, and it clearly conveys our main message that people of all backgrounds are profoundly concerned about the environment around them, absolutely... but of course with any image the viewer can bring their own interpretation to it.”

Artistic practices could also usefully disrupt expectations about who held power in the research setting and privilege different forms of knowledge. Community partners may have their own arts and cultural traditions and practices that university partners may find useful as formative aspects of research inquiry and/or knowledge production. In essence, both partners may have methods to contribute to the partnership. One academic describes, for example, the way in which her artist-collaborator, a fabric textile artist, used the clothes she was dressed in as a means of exploring these issues. She explained how the artist dressed the academic in Ghanaian fabrics that were specially made in order to communicate particular insights about her. This artistic intervention worked to:

“Tell stories which speak of who I am... and she's dressed me in them and used those as a research project for herself. So really flipping the more anthropological approach to research where somebody like me would research somebody like you [...] when I have done this at her instruction and with her guidance and have trusted her knowledge, it's opened lots of doors and it's facilitated all kinds of relationships. It's always meant that my body is dressed in a way that means there's a third term in the equation between us, there's an object there that we all touch and speak to that has meant that things have been much easier.”

The use of arts-based methods, however, was not without its tensions in these projects. For some university partners, the right to use these methods had to be fought for with funders, with departmental colleagues, with project partners. Despite the long history of practice as research and the established traditions of participatory research methods dating back over 50 years,<sup>17</sup> the long battle to recognise artistic practice as a valid form of social inquiry is still resisted by some project partners and funders.

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See Douglas, A. (2018) 'Redistributing Power?: A poetics of participation in contemporary arts' in Facer, K, and Dunleavy, K. (eds.) *AHRC Connected Communities Foundations Series on Collaborative Research*. Bristol: Bristol University/AHRC.

Pool, S. (2018) 'Everything and Nothing Is Up for Grabs: Using Artistic Methods within Participatory Research' in Facer, K, and Dunleavy, K. (eds.) *AHRC Connected Communities Foundations Series on Collaborative Research*. Bristol: Bristol University/AHRC.

Both available at: <https://connected-communities.org/index.php/connected-communities-foundation-series/>

## Managing time flexibly and responsively

In collaborations in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, project funding is mainly allocated to people's time. Indeed, we have argued elsewhere<sup>18</sup> that time is to collaborative research what a supercomputer is to big data analysis. Working with, managing and understanding how time is used on these projects is central to ensuring that they work well.

As we have already discussed, building trust and relationships is central to these collaborations, a process that takes time both within each project and over the longer term:

"It took a long time building trust, and a long time in sort of gaining that trust. And with that it means that for universities and for the civic organisations that want to do this, we need time and we need resources and we need to have that kind of patience. And what I mean by that is the institutional patience – we are not going to see the returns on this for a long time. We're going to spend a long time developing that."

There are significant pressures on time that projects need to juggle, however, almost all participants are usually engaged in other activities and projects need to have the flexibility to recognise the competing demands on individuals time, particularly within the community sector, and develop approaches to managing time that are responsive to these realities. This also means navigating the different 'timescales' of academics and community groups:

"It's a much quicker and tighter turnaround for community groups. So sometimes there's tensions I think between the way that you know an academic would do something and the much more condensed way in which community groups tend to do stuff."

These challenges are exacerbated when project teams have to respond to delayed funding decisions combined with inflexible deadlines for funding completion. In these cases, project activity is compressed into much smaller timescales which brings real pressure on participants:

"So whereas I think I was only supposed to be working on it two days per week ... I was working on it five days a week. But I mean if it had started when it was supposed to I would have only been working on it for two days a week. However because it had to be compressed into a much smaller period of time I was working much more on it. So the balance of this against my other responsibilities meant that I was probably spending, I don't know, 70% of my time on this and less time on other things. Which was fine because we wanted to deliver it and we knew it was time intensive, so others in the team helped me to be able to do that."

Not all organisations, however, are well placed to respond to changes in start dates and schedules. As two projects observed, there are real costs to these sorts of challenges:

"Because it took such a while for the funding decision to come back we couldn't start when we wanted to. So that did mean that we compressed a lot of work into a very short period of time, which was a bit stressful. It also does have an impact on cash flow particularly for small third sector organisations. So it's an issue to bear in mind when doing that kind of collaborative work that small, very small organisations like ours ... we pay people ... we have a lot of part time staff, we have some interns, we have some volunteers – these are all individuals who still need to earn money, so it can have a knock-on effect."

18

Facer, K. and Enright, B. (2016) Creating Living Knowledge. Bristol: AHRC/Bristol University, [https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge\\_Final\\_.pdf](https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge_Final_.pdf)

“You can’t just keep freelance artists to be kept waiting for this length of time and that they’ll just be holding on. And then that can really affect us, whether we can do things or not.”

Notably, however, many of these projects require more time than is originally allocated in the funding proposal. This means that project relationships are dependent on trust, goodwill and commitment of participants.

“In this project because the budget is actually rather small – up to £10,000, a lot of services are provided by the university for free. At the beginning I was told [by another academic colleague] ‘Your contribution is voluntary’ I said: ‘That’s fine, I’m part of the Chinese community, I’m going to want to do this for my community’. So all the time we invested is voluntary. Without input from Swansea University, without the dedication from [academic staff], without the support from the Employability Office, that project wouldn’t have taken off. The community partners – they are very mature, established, they have very talented capable managers – that helps as well.”

Ensuring that these projects work well, given this additional demand on participants time, therefore, is once again a question of building trust, commitment and relationships between project teams. A key element of this relates to ensuring that projects are able to manage time in ways that are appropriate to the work, and to the needs of all involved. This may be challenging if one of the significant aspects of partnership building is engaging in reparative work – especially as it relates to structural challenges, institutional inequities or discrimination, whether within the university, the community or across the project partners.

An important aspect of this is ensuring that the systems and processes are in place to enable project time and staff to be recorded in a flexible manner to allow for the necessary changes and issues that are faced by community organisations:

“With this particular piece of work the funding went to the university and so we were able to claim back from the university. A message for the university would be around trying to understand how difficult it is often to work out how money is spent when it comes to staffing. That’s not a funding issue, that’s more of a subcontracting issue. With small third sector organisations you can often have quite a high staff turnover, and that’s usually because people are employed on part-time contracts and so there are many of us who you know were more or less living hand to contract. What that meant was that I worked with quite a few people on this project and so when trying to like justify spends, that can be tricky. Also, members of staff do take on a variety of different roles, I had lots and lots of different roles... which meant that I did have to get support to help me to do various things. If funders could have more of an understanding about how small third sector organisations actually operate, how they work on a day to day basis. And maybe consult them.”

## Summary: Running projects successfully



Our 19 case studies and workshops provide a series of insights into what it takes to ensure collaborations work effectively, these include:

- Create the conditions for open dialogue and mutual respect.
- Acknowledge historical and social barriers that contribute to structured discrimination.
- Clear communication and a commitment to building robust relationships.
- Recognition of expertise and a commitment to listening and learning.
- Having difficult conversations to address emerging issues, including challenging stereotypes, confronting biases and addressing racist and discriminatory practices.
- Using appropriate methods to build trust with community partners.
- Working in multiple languages where appropriate.
- Using creative and arts-based methods.
- Managing time flexibly and responsively.



**Ensuring that projects work is a question of building trust, commitment and relationships between project teams. A key element of this relates to ensuring that projects are able to manage time in ways that are appropriate to the work and to the needs of all involved.**



# Navigating university systems

# 11

When we consider community–university partnerships, we can tend to focus on the project teams alone and the dynamics of the inter–relationships between community organisations, individual participants and individual academics. These partnerships, however, are located in a wider context of institutional relationships and structures. The institutional practices of universities, however, are often working in ways that are diametrically opposed to the aims and interests of these collaborative projects. Indeed, university systems and structures were cited as highly damaging to many project partnerships, partnerships that were only rescued by the additional and emotional labour of the academics in the partnerships and the ongoing goodwill and commitment of Black and Minority Ethnic community partners.

**T**he list of grievances against university systems and structures from our workshops and case study participants is long, familiar to anyone working with community–university partnerships, and includes:

- The systematic failure of the university as a large organisation to pay small community organisations in a timely manner, leading a number to face significant personal and organisational financial difficulties.
- The lack of availability of named and accessible individuals at the university to contact to discuss any issues relating to finance, legal and other contractual matters.
- The lack of flexibility of university finance systems to deal with the day–to–day practicalities of collaborative projects, including the need for small sums of petty cash to address issues such as payment for travel or subsistence, without the need for collaborators to complete lengthy and often inaccessible forms.
- The burden of contracts, legal and HR processes which serve to alienate community partners seeking to build a collaboration. Many of the contracts required by universities were overly long, rarely relevant to the nature of the smaller scale collaboration concerned and required significant legal expertise to decipher.
- The ethical forms and structures of the university that act as an impediment to collaboration and failed, in many cases, to fulfil the actual lived ethical obligations expected between the collaborating partners.

All participants in the case studies observed the extra time burden placed on projects by the bureaucracy of universities. Where project partners could not be expected to take on administrative tasks, these often fell to academics who would spend days on projects filling in forms and attempting to secure, for example, visas for artists and participants for international travel. Such time costs were felt to be difficult to include in project proposals but were core to the business of these sorts of collaborative projects.

Importantly, some of the bureaucratic challenges may be seen not as ubiquitous bureaucracy but as targeted attempts to alienate certain community organisations from participating within university systems. Where possible, some university team members may need to act as a buffer between the university systems and the community partners – translating, challenging and smoothing over various university practices.

These issues are addressed specifically in our recommendations and principles for fair research at the end of this report.



**The institutional practices of universities are often working in ways that are diametrically opposed to the aims and interests of these collaborative projects. Indeed, university systems and structures were cited as highly damaging to many project partnerships.**





The legacies  
of collaboration



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Elsewhere we have explored how the legacies of collaborative research<sup>19</sup> are comprised of six elements: products and material outputs; capacity building and personal development; networks and relationships; new ideas and concepts; changed institutions; and influences on the wider research landscape. We have also identified how these collaborations can leave both negative and positive legacies. The term 'legacy' is used to recognise the complexity of what emerges from projects: research is not a simple case of 'input-output', but a complex process of change.

**S**imilarly, in these 19 projects we see equally rich and complex legacies emerging. These are documented in full in the individual case studies. Here we want to pull out a small number of key features of the legacies of these projects and examine the insights into how these might be sustained and strengthened. We also discuss the risks to the long-term survival of these legacies and the impediments to longer-term benefit caused by short-term funding models.

## Contributions to knowledge

**A**s discussed in Section 4, these projects have made significant contributions in relation to their contribution to knowledge. They have produced substantial new archives documenting previously unrecorded or under-acknowledged histories and changed the ways that public histories are narrated. To name just a few: The **60 Untold Stories** project, for example, has for the first time documented the struggles and achievements of the first generation of Black middle-class professionals who made a significant contribution to their communities and to the UK. The **Southall Story** project produced a new account of the development of the British sound of bhangra, film, theatre and dance and the role of Southall as a key site in its development. The **Minding Black Histories** project documented the role of Congolese soldiers in the first world war. The **In Flux** project enabled the experiences of recent refugees to be voiced and recognised publicly. **Vernacular Religion** has produced a substantially more sophisticated account of the nature of religious belief in the Nepali community. The **Chinese Digital Storytelling** project provides the first account of the experiences of first generation Chinese migrants to settle in Swansea and local areas. The **Bench Project** provides new insights into the use of public space, and the reasons why Nepali elders in particular, used public space in particular ways. **Green and Black – Photovoice** profoundly challenged the perception of lack of interest in environmental issues in Black and Minority Ethnic communities by demonstrating the different ways in which these communities talk about and conceptualise 'the environment', profoundly enriching and making more complex the narrative about 'green issues'. **Intercultural Creativity** examined the process of transition and translation of sounds originating from Indian musical instruments to experimental electroacoustic sounds, opening up new areas of collaboration between electro-acoustic music and Indian instrumental music traditions.

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Facer, K. and Enright, B. (2016) *Creating Living Knowledge*. Bristol: AHRC Connected Communities/ Bristol University, [https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final\\_.pdf](https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final_.pdf)

Each of the individual case studies provides a more detailed account of these substantial contributions to knowledge, culture and historical understanding. What is important to consider (and we shall come to this later in this section) is that these and other legacies are not being adequately captured and archived for future use and knowledge forming.

## Educational legacies

A commitment to educational legacy was a key feature of these projects. In some cases, the educational imperative was explicit – as in **Making Histories**, where the focus of the project was in discussing the contribution of Black histories as a core element of UK history in schools. In other cases, the improvement of public knowledge was a central aim – as in **Slave Trade Legacies**, in which the project aimed to address the previous absences and silences in the public presentation of the story of cotton in the industrial revolution. Here the project teams succeeded in ensuring that the narratives of African Caribbean peoples and indentured Indian labourers who were central to the production of cotton, were made visible in the public accounts of this history through both permanent exhibits and through the knowledge of museum guides.

The educational legacy of these projects is also visible in other ways. In **Minding Black Histories**, **Translating the experience of emotional distress** and **Imagine**, young people are involved as co-researchers and key informants in projects, exploring their own histories, making connections between their own lives and historical figures and being supported to share the important knowledge that they have in improving contemporary understanding and analysis of migration or life in Northern cities.

A wider educational imperative is visible in the commitment of these projects to producing publicly accessible archives and resources. Public exhibitions, for example, are a key feature of the work. As are documentaries and web-based film archives. These mark a distinctive shift towards a commitment to open access and sharing of project findings that far exceeds the usual attempt to make journal papers freely available and comprises a wholesale shift in the way in which knowledge is communicated by making raw materials and information available online. Indeed, this desire to correct the historical record and to do so publicly, is a central driver for a number of these projects.

Finally, these projects are also speaking to and educating policy audiences, actively and carefully attempting to produce a better understanding amongst policy bodies of the experiences, knowledge and contribution of BME communities in the UK today and in the past. Significant contributions amongst these projects include: the work of the **Imagine** project which made substantial contributions to understanding of community experiences in the wake of the Jay Report on sexual abuse in Rotherham; the contributions of the **PASAR** project to understanding the experiences of women with no recourse to public funds amongst policy makers, through a full day of performance and workshops at Westminster built on the participatory theatre work of the project; the contributions of the **Bass Culture** project to the knowledge and understanding that informed the Grime Report – a major contribution to understanding the role and nature of contemporary music today.

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## Changing the University

**W**e have already signalled the current under-representation of Black and Minority Ethnic staff at UK universities, in particular research-intensive universities. The solution to this under-representation is usually some reference to widening participation which can end up devolving the discussion to commentary about the failures of the school system. These projects, however, demonstrate the ways in which research collaborations between universities and BME communities are potentially a much more effective way of rapidly transforming the university and its intellectual resources and knowledge by drawing in and building on BME community partner expertise within the university. They also showcase the importance of demystifying and decolonising knowledge production and access to educational spaces.

This happened in the following ways: community partners were invited to give lectures and make contributions to teaching programmes; project materials and archives were used as part of teaching programmes; community partners were recognised as research fellows in the university; at least two community partners have been registered for PhDs, others have signed up for Masters courses, younger participants have identified an interest in joining the university; others have developed a confidence as community researchers independent of university validation. In the context of debates about widening participation, of decolonising the institution and of ensuring greater ethnic diversity amongst staff, the opportunity that these projects offer to more rapidly ensure that the university better reflects its communities is obvious.

We should, however, sound a note of caution. These processes alone will not transform the university and BME staff continue to face experiences of racism within the university even after they have been there for many years. As one of our respondents recounted:

“I mean five years into being in this space, in the 1990s, I can remember being in a queue in the staff canteen... and the person in front of me turned around and went ‘Uhum!’ – coughed... I just dismissed it as a cough. About two minutes later this person turned around and coughed again but slightly louder, but the cough was now directed at me, and we made eye contact. On the third occasion this person coughed and was about to say something, but he’d already said it, it was there in the intent of the previous two coughs. On the third occasion, I intervened and asked ‘What is your problem?’ and his response was ‘Oh you do realise this is the staff canteen?’, and my response was ‘What does it suggest to you if I’m still standing here after the first two coughs?’ He paused for a moment before saying ‘Oh I’m, terribly sorry, terribly sorry’ and turned around. What that said to me, having already been here in this space for like five years, is that I was still assumed ‘other’ and in the wrong place, and that my presence in the staff canteen was sufficiently odd to this person, who felt empowered to question my being there.”

Importantly, however, this individual has gone on to play a significant mediating role for the institution between the university and BME communities, something that is dependent on the way that he maintains a much more complex identity inside the university:

“Because if you let go and you become ‘other’, become the institution, that’s not productive. My relationship meant that I was a community operator within academia, not an academic trying to connect with the community.”

It is, indeed, notable when we look at our case studies, that 14 of the 19 case studies were led from the university side either by Black and Minority Ethnic individuals or by white women. While we cannot say that these figures are representative of the wider landscape of university-community collaboration, we can simply note that this is a high figure and suggests that the responsibility for building partnerships is perhaps being taken by individuals who may see themselves as insider/outsiders within the academy today. What we have not done in this project is track the impact of this work on the career progression of these academic staff members. How the advantages and responsibilities of building partnerships might be more radically distributed across the full demographic of the university is something that also remains to be addressed.

## Archiving, ownership and longer-term sustainability of outputs

One of the key legacy questions facing these projects relates to the longer-term sustainability of their outputs. Many of the materials produced are web based and few of the projects had had substantial conversations about how these materials might be preserved in the long-term as digital platforms change and funding for websites ends. In many cases, the university was the default body responsible for maintaining the websites and archive materials that were produced. This, however, does not necessarily guarantee their long-term survival. Given the precariousness of university webpages and other issues involving upkeep and maintenance, there are significant risks to this information being lost. It is inevitable, therefore, that, unless conscious intervention is made there will be a renewed loss of this information to the historical record, and a diminishing range of repeat endeavours.

In one case, the project had given long and detailed thoughts to the challenges of archiving and the questions of sustainability and continuing community access that this entails:

“Because a lot of our work is now digital or happens in the digital space, one of the first questions we had to respond to was archiving and ownership. Because if you do interviews – who owns the interviews, where are they stored? [...] in terms of ownership, the primary institution is [the University of] Westminster – it kind of has to be but then I negotiated with our partners that key BME content first rests with Black Cultural Archives [BCA]. So even if I partner with the British Library or the V&A as one of the partners or whomever BCA owns content. And the reason for this is access down the line and the community needs to feel comfortable they’ll have access to their content and that they’re not going to be charged to access this content when they need it. It’s also about familiarity, their content resides in a space they recognise and identify as their own.”

Such careful reflection, however, was not always evident in the projects raising concerns about how vulnerable these important archives might be to longer term erasure.

Questions of ownership of intellectual property, particularly in relation to cultural outputs, was more common in those projects associated with artistic endeavour and collaboration. In other projects, however, the question of who ‘owned’ the data and in particular the materials, writing and reports that came out of the project was less commonly discussed or if discussed, it remained unclear.

“So this is something that we haven’t actually spoken about. It is something we need to speak about. Because for the community in terms of us hitting our kind of line of working with the community, we want them to have ownership but we haven’t had that written like in stone, nothing’s been written in stone. It’s very blurred at the moment.”

As with other collaborative and co-productive projects, whose knowledge counts as valuable knowledge can be a challenge. In situations where partners may experience or perceive inequity, discrimination or systemic racism, discussing issues of intellectual property power sharing and knowledge production may be one way to foster positive partnership building. There are different models in operation within our case studies. In some, the community partner takes over the website and maintains responsibility for it over the longer term as it contributes to their core activities. In others the university maintains responsibilities.

Academic outputs, such as journal papers, however, were disproportionately produced and ‘owned’ by the university. One reason for this was that university partners tended to take the lead in the production of papers. This tended to be produced after project funding was finished so there was limited opportunity for community partners to take a role.



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## The legacies of short-term funding

**11** of the case studies were funded for a period of 12 months or less, offering relatively short-term and small-scale investment. While this small-scale funding was seen to be useful in initiating dialogue there were concerns about the timescale and duration of projects in relation to the potential legacies and outcome of the work.

For community partners there was a concern that, on projects where their core costs could not be included and where activities were short-term, they would be left more vulnerable on completion of the project than at the beginning:

“Collaboration is great to a certain extent on these small time-sensitive projects, but also you need to think about capacity building and the extent to which if you’re bringing in a pot of money into an organisation, which is great for a year, and then once that money has gone if there isn’t anything built into that project that will enable those individuals to continue working in that organisation...for that organisation to continue doing similar types of work, then it shouldn’t really be done.”

At the same time, short-term collaborations risked feeding into the perception that universities were only committed to partnership so long as external funding was available and it was in their economic interests. As one community partner observed:

“I think the longer-term legacy is making the university aware that they have to have a longer-term view of going into communities, because the short-term approach is just not effective, the short-term approach ruins relationships with communities [...] this longer-term approach is like so integral. If they want to work with communities they have to put in the time and they have to build those relationships and the trust. And not just disappear at the end of it as well, they have to just stick around and think about what’s going to be in it for the community, not just what’s going to help their research, but how will it benefit the community as well.”

## The need for follow-on and longer duration funding to secure legacy and impact

**A**s a consequence, these interviews repeatedly make the case for follow-on and longer-term funding processes. These were seen as central not only for avoiding the issues already raised in terms of the harm to partners and to trust that emerges from poorly run short-term activities, but in relation to the benefits that might be secured with more sustained involvement. As one partner observed, for example, achieving social and policy change does not happen on a short timescale:

“I can’t see the legacy. I think...because when academics go, the NGO is left really with the council, i.e. the main power brokers in the area – how do you influence that? I think its repeat funding. Yeah, has to be repeat funding. So then this project can emerge into phase 2, phase 3, phase 4. I think if it’s just short-term then it’s not going to work. There’s no legacy...legacy is an un-useful term, it’s like a process of change isn’t it? Legacy sounds like you know you’ve achieved something. So for me legacy is like democracy, you don’t actually get to democracy, you don’t actually get to a legacy. Like in democracy, it’s a process that is continually ongoing – you can’t get to democracy. [...] I think the longer-term legacy, is making the university aware that they have to have a longer-term view of going into communities, because the short-term approach is just not effective – the short-term approach ruins relationships with communities.”

Critically, university partners observed that where follow-on funding was available it was often not fit for the purpose of deepening and strengthening these partnerships as the emphasis was, too often, premised on scaling-up, dissemination or new activities:

“I think [one message] would definitely be do it more long-term. [...] There was a follow up scheme from NERC and we did apply for it but I knew I didn't have a chance of getting funding, because they wanted a network of academics around the country. I appreciate that being the ambition, but how do you do a network of academics around the country who are going to do deep, meaningful, trust-based collaboration with their local communities? It's just not a model that engages any sort of marginalised community. It's a great model for doing outreach and doing very worthy and very fantastic engagement type of activity, but it is not a good model for building dialogue between academia and those communities. So I think the funding needs to recognise place, it needs to recognise the fact that you need deep relationships... you can still learn lessons that you can share with the rest of the world, but you're not going to like change the world, you need to really focus in on these sort of local things ... and then hopefully you could scale them up later.”

“The thing with impact [...] to my mind, the problem can be 'I'm going to work with you and we're going to have all this lovely impact stuff, I'll write an impact case study for the REF [see glossary]. And then by the way I'll see you in five years' time when I need to come and collect my data'. And you can't do that, if you're going to do it meaningfully you need to keep going with that connection after the grant has finished. The problem is at the moment there is no mechanism to support that, either within universities or through the funding organisations.”

Again, many case studies noted that the relationships that they are building – often within marginalized communities – demand new ways of working and possibly new ways of supporting these types of partnerships. What they call for are new models of change-making and partnership growing.

The negative legacies of short-term funding models are not only felt on the community and policy side, but in terms of the academic knowledge that is produced. Often the current funding models assume that writing academic papers will be done on completion of a project as part of academic day jobs. The problem here is clearly that community partners are not being funded to continue to play a role in this stage of the research, meaning that their expertise and input is not able to inform this process of knowledge production.

“It ought to be built in to the projects that there is a kind of follow up. I mean obviously you wouldn’t want to give it in every case or automatically, but there ought to be more possibilities for follow-on funding to deepen the findings, also maybe to give more time for the writing up. Because it’s always the case that you’ve got more material than you can process.”

One consequence of this is that some project teams prioritise the production of outputs that are material, tangible and of clear immediate and visible benefits such as exhibitions, policy reports and websites, and that the production of knowledge that will fit within the academic literature is under-resourced. In so doing, once again, Black histories and knowledge are disadvantaged from taking their place in the academic knowledge landscape and instead, remain vulnerable in formats that do not have longer-term security. In assessing the reported and substantial outcomes from projects where we were able to interview participants, against the reported information contained within public databases, we are concerned that this knowledge has not been adequately shared, attributed, acknowledged or challenged. Given their scope and reach, we envision that much of this material may be lost to future generations of scholars and communities. This should concern all of us.

## Beyond the short-term funding model?

**T**he short-term project-based funding model is now so taken for granted that a short-term perspective is naturalised in both university and community sectors. Both university and community partners take for granted a competitive, project-based approach to securing resource for activities. It is worth noting, however, that this does not have to be the case.

Universities have discretion in how they spend research funding that is allocated on a longer-term basis (through quality-related funding and the REF), they have discretion in how they spend funds allocated to impact acceleration, and as institutions they have other regular and long-standing income streams that mean they are able to make longer-term plans (which they do at present in relation to campus development or some longer-term industrial partnerships in the field of Science and Engineering, for example). Similarly, funding bodies have the potential to make funding awards of a longer duration (not necessarily at a higher value), and to ringfence resource for follow-on and development work.

Both funders and universities therefore have the capacity, if desired, to allocate resources over a longer time period and to support investment in partnerships and infrastructure development as well as specific project activities. Given the disproportionate under-representation of Black and Minority Ethnic staff, students and community organisations within the research landscape, clearer and more targeted investment might actually produce the step-change often discussed – but not fully financially supported – around equality, diversity and inclusion plans and initiatives.

**\*  
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## Summary: The legacies of collaboration

**T**hese projects produce a wide range of important legacies including products and material outputs, capacity building and personal development, networks and relationships, new ideas and concepts, changed institutions and influences on the wider research landscape. In particular they make the following important contributions:

- Enriching and correcting the knowledge landscape by ensuring that new knowledge and archives are produced.
- Providing important educational contributions to public history and knowledge, to participants, to policy audiences.
- Changing the university by building trust between communities and universities and opportunities for members of BME communities to teach, research and engage in formal training.

There are a number of challenges to developing longer-term and more widespread legacies from these projects:

- The issue of ownership, archiving and longer-term sustainability of outputs is not always addressed in project planning, leaving archives and knowledge vulnerable to loss and undermining the capacity to build more substantial insights across multiple projects and activities.
- Short-term funding can leave negative legacies for the ongoing economic sustainability of small community organisations and can undermine trust between universities and communities.
- The lack of commitment to longer-term collaboration also militates against the development of partnerships that can effect serious policy changes over time and against the collaborative writing that would ensure that the academic knowledge base reflects the knowledge produced in the research.

It is worth noting, however, that the current short-term funding model does not have to be the only model for supporting these collaborations:

- Universities are able to develop longer-term commitments and partnerships should they desire through their use of block research funding, although we see very little evidence of this in the Arts, Humanities and Social Science arenas.
- Funders are able to shape funding to enable the same resource to be allocated over the longer term, and to offer follow-on calls to enable existing partnerships to be sustained; too often follow-on calls expect 'scaling up' rather than deepening and development of what may be early stage relationships that require continuing support.

# Conclusion



There is important and urgent action that needs to be taken in particular by funders and by university leaders, to address the current situation in which the knowledge, expertise, interests and needs of diverse communities are not being reflected in the research landscape.



To many people familiar with the challenges of building community-university partnerships, many of the issues we have raised in this analysis will be familiar – the difficulty of establishing contact, the importance of time, safe spaces and dialogue to address project challenges, the need for partners to work together to develop projects that are both mutually beneficial and that can be practically delivered on the ground, the persistent problems of dealing with university systems and the important role of brokers, mediators, creative methods and improvisation in creating conditions for new forms of knowledge production and sharing.

What is clear, however, is that these issues are intensified when examined through the lens of race equality. They are intensified by stereotypes and racism, by ignorance and anxiety, by the harm done to communities from previously extractive research and cultural appropriation, by the barriers of economics, finance and language for some participants and the lack of confidence in being heard and respected for others, by the low numbers of Black and Minority academics in the university and at senior levels, by the challenges facing BME community and cultural organisations under conditions of austerity and continued failures of institutions to make significant advances in equality and inclusion.

These 19 projects and some of our workshop discussions, however, demonstrate what can happen when partners are enabled to work through these difficulties and where friendships and relationships have grown around common interests and mutual concern. They demonstrate how civil society groups and cultural organisations can clearly hold the line in terms of what they expect from universities in terms of a fair and mutual research collaboration. They demonstrate that universities can listen, learn and share their own knowledge freely. They demonstrate that powerful new archives, social learning, products and policies can be produced that serve to correct the historical record and better reflect the realities and experiences of all communities today.

The challenge we face is how to better facilitate these partnerships. The two final sections of this report begin to map out how to address this:

- first, we establish a set of key principles for ‘fair and mutual research partnerships’ that can guide the overarching approach to building mutually beneficial partnerships;
- second, we provide a series of recommendations for universities, funders and community organisations to address the institutional, structural, practical and organisational issues needed to enable partnerships to operate within these principles.

There is important and urgent action that needs to be taken in particular by funders and by university leaders, to address the current situation in which the knowledge, expertise, interests and needs of diverse communities are not being reflected in the research landscape. We hope that, together, these principles and recommendations will ensure that research collaborations make a major contribution to strengthening the long-term capacity of Black and Minority Ethnic organisations and communities to build powerful knowledge today and in the future. Alongside the necessary work to address structural inequalities in other areas – such as widening participation and decolonising the curriculum – these research collaborations will begin to transform universities into powerful spaces for mutual learning, dialogue and the enrichment of our collective knowledge base.



**Alongside the necessary work to address structural inequalities in other areas these research collaborations will begin to transform universities into powerful spaces for mutual learning, dialogue and the enrichment of our collective knowledge base.**



**Fair and  
mutual research  
partnerships:**

**10 principles for  
community-university  
partnerships**

**A critical issue in the analysis of our case studies is the fundamental economic, cultural and social inequality that underpins the relationship between a large well-funded organisation such as a university and smaller community organisations. This inequality manifests itself in poor practices that impede productive collaborations.**

**W**ith this in mind and inspired by the Fair-Trade principles (which underpin sustainable trading partnerships between large organisations and smaller partners) we propose a set of 'fair and mutual research principles'. These should underpin the development of any research partnership but are particularly important for those involving partners from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

These principles are intended to support funders, universities and community partners in understanding and assessing what would constitute a non-exploitative and productive research partnership between universities and smaller community and cultural organisations, groups and individuals.

These principles should be read in conjunction with the Durham Centre for Participatory Research/National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement's 'Community Based Participatory Research: Ethical Principles' guidelines.<sup>20</sup> They should also be considered in the context of new approaches to evaluating research value such as the Research Quality Plus<sup>21</sup> approach developed by the International Development Research Centre. The institutional, structural, organisational and practical measures that are needed to ensure that these principles can be delivered are discussed in the Recommendations.

We propose that a fair and mutual research partnership should be characterised by:

## **1 A commitment to strengthening the partnering community organisation**

Any partnership between a university and a community/cultural organisation or group should be premised on leaving that organisation stronger than before the participation. This might take the form, amongst others, of building capacity and knowledge within the organisation, the development of new products and services, the opportunity to take a strategic look at the work of the organisation, the building of new networks. Importantly, the partner organisation needs to know that the collaboration will not leave them financially or organisationally weaker than when they began the project.

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Banks, S. and Manners, P. (2012) *Community-based participatory research: a guide to ethical principles and practice*. Bristol: National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/beacon/CBPREthicsGuidewebNovember20121.pdf>

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Ofir, Z., Schwandt, T., Duggan, C. and McLean, R. (2016) *Research Quality Plus: A Holistic Approach to Evaluating Research*. Ottawa: IDRC. <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/56528/IDL-56528.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

**2 A commitment to mutual benefit**  
Any partnerships between universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities should address mutually beneficial needs and concerns. There should be sufficient time in the development process for the project to identify what these are on both sides and to clearly articulate the mutual benefit for each partner prior to projects being funded. Intrinsic to exploring mutual benefits is the need to acknowledge in a constructive and open mode prevailing prejudices and discriminatory practices that sustain inequality.

**3 A commitment to transparency and accountability**  
Transparency and accountability needs to operate at multiple levels from the institutional level to the individual project level. Universities need to be clear about how and why they are forming partnerships with particular communities and what the processes are for building new partnerships with other organisations and communities. It should be clear how communities might approach universities for partnership and on what basis. In relation to bid development between partners, there needs to be complete transparency about the funding process, the allocation of budgets and how and why resources are being allocated and to whom. This transparency should be reflected in ethical procedures that are not reliant on obscure or legalistic processes, but which are written and communicated in ways that ensure that all partners understand what is happening in a research process and have clear and ongoing opportunities to give or withhold consent for participation.

**4 Fair practices in payments**  
Partnerships must be characterised by fairness in the payment process. This means that the process for payments is clear and transparent; ensuring that payment is made promptly in a timely manner, and in advance if necessary given the needs of the project or the partner. It means ensuring that the bureaucratic processes for claiming payment are not so onerous that partners are dissuaded from claiming, and that there are clear mechanisms for addressing difficulties with payments.

## **5 Fair payments for participants**

Payments to participants in research projects should recognise the time and valuable expertise that partners are contributing to the project, ensuring that they are remunerated in a manner commensurate with that expertise – unless the partner has clearly and willingly identified that they see these activities as a core part of their own mission and priorities. Any payments should take into account not only the activity cost, but the core costs of the organisation and the opportunity cost of not participating in other activities.

## **6 A commitment to fair knowledge exchange**

This principle reflects the fact that research partnerships should build upon and recognise the knowledge and expertise of all participants. This means that all partners will be recognised and expected to contribute distinctive knowledge and expertise to the project, that no partner will be expected or entitled to bear the full weight of theorising or interpreting the work of the project, and that all partners will seek to build dialogue across different sets of knowledge and experience. Critically, a commitment to fair knowledge exchange also recognises that some forms of knowledge traditions are associated with and belong to particular communities and therefore cannot be freely shared or used without permission.

## **7 A commitment to sustainability and legacy**

The value of a fair and mutual research project will be judged not only in its immediate outcomes, but over the longer-term. Project participants will be expected to develop plans for longer-term legacy and sustainability by agreeing how data and outputs from projects will be protected, shared and accessed over the long-term, and by whom. This does not mean that all projects themselves need to be sustained in the long-term (indeed, some projects and interventions are successful precisely because they are temporary), but that the question of sustainability and development should be posed from the outset.

**8 A commitment to equality and diversity**  
All communities are dynamic and comprised of different groups and interests within them. The intersection of these different interests and experiences should be considered wherever relevant. Projects should actively seek to avoid reproducing and intensifying already existing prejudices and stereotypes within and between communities. Partnering organisations should actively promote equity and inclusion and constructively engage in dismantling structural racism and discrimination. Attention needs to be paid in all partnerships to the specific experiences of both university and community partnering organisations, including recognising what claims for representation can and cannot be made by the organisations involved.

**9 A commitment to sectoral as well as organisational development**  
Fair and mutual research partnerships are understood to be making a contribution to the wider knowledge landscape and to the wider public good. Arrangements will therefore need to be made to ensure that project outputs are captured in ways that enable them to be shared with a wider community, and that the learning from these projects is available and accessible to be shared with a wider academic and community constituency. This means paying attention to questions of documentation, archiving, attribution, communication and publishing and to the important issue of longer-term legacy and sustainability of the work.

**10 A commitment to reciprocal learning**  
Fair and mutual research projects will be expected to contribute to the wider knowledge base about how to build better university–community collaborations and to reflect and document what has been learned about partnership processes during their project. This will involve learning that is reciprocal, with large institutions often having as much (or more) to learn as smaller ones, and in which the process of dialogue is ongoing. Where appropriate, project teams will be expected to advocate for and build capacity in partnership working with other organisations and networks. Public reporting by universities and funders on progress against the principles of fair and mutual research partnerships will be essential to compliance with these principles.



There is no simplistic guide for guaranteeing successful research partnerships between communities and universities but there is a set of significant common problems and potential areas for action that can be addressed.



## Recommendations

There is no simplistic guide for guaranteeing successful research partnerships between communities and universities. Black and Minority Ethnic communities, civil society organisations and cultural organisations are highly diverse, with very different levels of economic and social capital, with very different organisational structures, very different interests and expertise, working with very different communities and constituencies. Reciprocally, universities are powerful institutions with different attitudes towards and experience of collaboration, different relationships with local and global communities, different attitudes and openness to the incorporation of new knowledge and different levels of institutional staff diversity. A 'one size fits all' approach simply will not be appropriate.

**T** here are, however, a set of significant and shared issues that we believe signal common problems and potential areas for action, even within their divergent themes, contexts and objectives. Although we remain clear on the limitations of taking a few case studies and generalising to wider society we believe that there is a value in sharing these issues and common problems. Through our investigations and through listening to people like you, we have assembled a set of recommendations. At the heart of these recommendations is a core tenet that:

**Collaboration depends initially on an active engagement and desire to create an equitable and respectful space in which people are willing to come together, understand and engage with each other's distinctive knowledge and experience, and explore opportunities and barriers to mutually beneficial outcomes. Once this has been achieved, partners must work together to build trust and to explore where common ground and mutual interests might be developed.**

This tenet underpins the fair and mutual research principles.

Included below are a number of specific recommendations for universities, academics, community and cultural organisations, funders, government and regulatory bodies that would improve significantly the conditions within which these partnerships emerge and are sustained. All of these recommendations play a role in addressing the structural inequalities within the research landscape and creating a firmer foundation for trust and partnerships between Black and Minority Ethnic communities and universities, although they cannot resolve them without wider structural change. Many of these recommendations will also be of benefit to developing relationships with other communities with whom universities historically struggle to build partnerships.

These recommendations have been drafted on the basis of the findings from our case studies, through a roundtable with university, funding and infrastructure bodies, and from discussions arising in our regional workshops. They offer guidance for five groups:

- A — University leaders.**
- B — Academics.**
- C — Community, civil society and creative organisation.**
- D — Funding bodies and infrastructure organisations.**
- E — National HE/university and research policy bodies.**

All of these groups will need to play a role in working together to address these challenges.

## A. Guidance for university leaders

**T** here are seven key areas in which universities can make significant progress towards building fair and mutual research partnerships:

- 1 — Staffing and brokerage.**
- 2 — Funding development.**
- 3 — Leadership and monitoring.**
- 4 — Campus development.**
- 5 — Finance and contracts.**
- 6 — Communication and openness.**
- 7 — Ethical procedures.**

### Universities 1: STAFFING AND BROKERAGE

A key requirement for universities seeking to build partnerships with communities beyond their walls is to ensure that the university itself reflects and supports staff drawn from all the communities in the UK. To do this will require active attempts to recruit staff from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds; it will also require active efforts to improve the cultural competency of existing staff and to ensure that the culture of the university is welcoming to all – including by confronting structural racism and discriminatory practices. Staff working in partnership with communities also need to be valued, and more flexibility in roles and positions should be developed to enable expert community members to take on roles within the university as academics and as brokers. University leadership therefore needs to take responsibility for the following:

- 1 —** University academic and professional services staff should actively engage in initiatives that allow them to train, support and employ staff that reflect the ethnic diversity of their local community; there should be clear targets for diversity of staff make-up that are recognised within the university; and the make-up of the staff body should be visibly and actively reported by universities in their own public facing materials with UK/international staff distinctions clarified.
- 2 —** Public engagement teams must reflect the diversity of their local community.

- 3 — University governance bodies should reflect the diversity of the local community.
- 4 — Race equality training and materials that move beyond 'unconscious bias' training, such as 'Let's Talk about Race' (from Business in the Community) should be widely available for all staff.
- 5 — Universities must examine and review their strategic community partnerships – including those with cultural organisations, civil society and industry – for the inclusion of Black and Minority Ethnic community representation.
- 6 — Universities should commit to regular monitoring and review to ensure strategy is implemented as intended, and there should be clear procedures to ensure that failure can be reported by staff and communities in confidence and with relevant support.
- 7 — Members of local and creative communities should be invited to act as (paid) brokers and mediators with BME communities where such knowledge and expertise does not exist in the university. There may be a need to publicly announce these opportunities and to refresh them, as needed, in order to ensure wide representation from the community.
- 8 — Community research partners from Minority Ethnic backgrounds working on collaborative projects should be enabled to play a role in the university as research fellows, with formal recognition of their contribution and opportunities to contribute to teaching from this research.
- 9 — University-community research partnerships and activity that exist outside formal project funding need to be recognised in staff promotions and progression procedures and acknowledged in workload arrangements.

### Universities 2: FUNDING DEVELOPMENT

Fair and mutual research partnerships require time, effort and resources. This time and effort is often something that takes place without funding, remuneration or recognition. Funding, however, usually plays an important role in facilitating partnerships. This should be understood to take two forms: institutional level funding to support individuals in developing and sustaining partnerships; and project level support for activities. Both are important. The way in which funding proposals are developed lays the foundations for successful partnerships, this is therefore a critically important stage. These, then, are recommendations for research support and development teams in universities:

- 1 — Consider whether HEIF and Impact Acceleration Funding can better be allocated to the development of long-term partnerships with BME organisations rather than relying on short-term project funding.
- 2 — Recognise that additional costs will be needed to facilitate productive dialogue between partners, including costs for low-income participants. These need to be included in bids at a realistic level, with resource made available for contingencies. Dialogue with funders may be necessary to agree this before bid submission stage.

- 3 — Ensure that research support teams are up to date on the specific allowable costs that funders are increasingly including to support community-university partnerships.
- 4 — Ensure that all projects have sustainability and legacy discussions from the outset, and that these are costed for in project proposals and reflected in institutional commitments.
- 5 — Consider how projects might be networked together to create more robust and sustainable outcomes.
- 6 — If the requirement of an 80% funding rule (FEC) is to be applied to all costs on a project, make sure this is clear from the outset and activities costed accordingly. Do not assume that top slicing research income on project start-up without warning is acceptable either to partners or to funders.
- 7 — Ensure all professional services staff working to develop or manage funding related to collaborative partnerships are appropriately trained and supported.<sup>22</sup>

### Universities 3: LEADERSHIP AND MONITORING

Many universities have now begun to identify senior (often Pro-Vice Chancellor level) leadership roles for partnerships and engagement. These are essential to creating productive conditions for community-university engagement. The clear recommendation here, therefore, is that all universities should:

- 1 — Establish a PVC level post responsible for developing 'fair and mutual' university-community partnerships in research and teaching, with clear KPIs and responsibility for monitoring diversity of such partnerships and facilitating institutional and structural change in support of partnerships.
- 2 — Vice Chancellor and senior team salaries should be considered in relation to their success in addressing BME under-representation.

### Universities 4: CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

Universities across the UK are developing new campuses. Although a more active culture of equality is required and will take time to embed, these provide important opportunities to create new productive and ongoing working relations between communities and the university. Those leading the development of new campuses therefore should:

- 1 — Consider how BME cultural and community organisations can be meaningfully co-located on campus.
- 2 — Consider where campuses are located and whether satellite or settlement campuses in multiple communities might create more powerful bridges between universities and diverse communities.
- 3 — Explore opportunities that new campuses open up to diversify staffing and to recognise in their appointments a range of experience equivalent to academic qualifications.

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**Universities across the UK are developing new campuses which provide important opportunities to create new productive and ongoing working relations between communities and the university.**  
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<sup>22</sup> Dunleavy, K., Noble, M. and Andrews, H. (forthcoming) 'The Emergence of the Publicly Engaged Research Manager' *Research for All*.

- 4 — Examine how space and facilities in new campuses might play enabling roles as resources for BME organisations — such as providing space for meetings and access to other facilities.
- 5 — Consider strategic partnerships with BME organisations to develop flagship institutions opening up new areas of inquiry, research, teaching and support for existing centres and structures.
- 6 — Effectively incorporate new knowledge generated by fair and mutual research partnerships into the teaching on the campus.

#### Universities 5: FINANCE AND CONTRACTS

As discussed in the report, the practical experience of working with the university as a contractor, supplier and partner can significantly undermine the goodwill that many communities and academics have spent time developing. It is essential, therefore, that universities, as large organisations, pay attention to how their processes impact on the relationships that they are seeking to develop with communities. Professional services teams in universities therefore need to ensure:

- 1 — That contracts and information are accessible and legible for all partners, including the development of plain English versions.
- 2 — The contractual premise is 'fair and mutual' and not one sided.
- 3 — That payment is timely and does not require undue bureaucracy in terms of claiming payment.
- 4 — That partners have named individuals in finance teams who they can contact if there is a problem with payment; and that these individuals are trained in and aware of the issues facing smaller community organisations and able to advocate for them within the institution. Continuity of such contact is critically important and university leadership should recognise the negative impact of rapid staff moves (or changes in work patterns) in finance and contracts teams for the maintenance of positive partnership working.
- 5 — That practical workarounds or more formal mechanisms such as cash passports are required to enable the payment of small expenses on a regular basis as part of these projects.
- 6 — Recognise that over-zealous and inappropriate application of Home Office requirements can be deleterious to projects, and that accessible and friendly approaches are needed that do not, for example, require partners to redisplay constantly their passport to strangers. Recognise that the application of these regulations is likely to most negatively impact on refugee and migrant communities and will have differential impacts on different Minority Ethnic communities. Their application, therefore, is not neutral.

## Universities 6: COMMUNICATION AND OPENNESS

A critical challenge for universities in building productive fair and mutual research partnerships is clear and open communication about their expertise, about their role in the community and, in some cases, about their role in past and present injustices in relation to race. To address these a number of practical steps at different scales, from personal to institutional, are required:

- 1 — Institutionally, universities need to have clear points of contact for organisations and groups wishing to explore the potential of building partnerships in and with the institution. Online, this might take the form of a contact form or even a live chat. Face to face, this might take the form of open days and workshops for potential partners.
- 2 — The Science Shop model, in which individuals and groups from outside the university can pose questions or challenges that require addressing, is one that could be explored much more by the UK higher education sector, alongside small-scale funding to facilitate exploration of generative questions, possibly at local Citizen UK gatherings.
- 3 — Universities with historic links to slavery and the proceeds of slavery need to acknowledge this fact publicly and develop new investments with relevant communities as racialised inequality is underpinned by the justifications of slavery and colonialism.
- 4 — Institutions must begin to link up with civil society, arts and other community partners already engaged in work around themes of inclusion, equity, diversity and equality.

## Universities 7: ETHICAL PROCEDURES

Finally, it is essential that university research ethics committees:

- 1 — Develop and encourage the creation of new forms of ethical procedure that are appropriate to collaborative qualitative research practices. In particular, such procedures need to: engage with and respond to situations in which communities may not be used to or comfortable with signing ethics forms; encourage the development of ongoing and mutual reflection on the ethical challenges being raised; and recognise the different cultural traditions and/or the different histories of exploitation and risk that different minority groups may have experienced in relation to previous legalistic/ethical procedures.

## B. Guidance for Academics

**R**

Recommendations for academics focus on five key areas:

- 1 — **The use of space and time.**
- 2 — **Knowledge and expertise.**
- 3 — **Communication.**
- 4 — **Funding processes.**
- 5 — **Legacy and sustainability.**

## Academics 1: SPACE AND TIME

An important challenge to academics is to find new places and new processes through which to engage in dialogue with communities beyond the walls of the university. Academics should therefore:

- 1 — Actively seek out opportunities to run welcoming and hospitable events and activities in spaces outside the university and closer to more diverse communities.
- 2 — Remember that partnership is not just about formal meetings, but about creating time and space for dialogue in informal ways.
- 3 — Ensure that in planning events and conversations that religious festivals and calendars are taken into account in terms of their potential impact on the possibility and quality of participation from different communities.
- 4 — Explore the possibility of working in or being based in community spaces for projects and longer-term partnerships. The university is not the only place in which it is possible to produce research and recognising, supporting and working in the institutions and spaces of diverse communities will offer more opportunities for members of those communities to participate.
- 5 — Recognise that projects will need to allocate time for difficult conversations and for things going wrong – sticking firmly to the Gantt chart might be counter-productive in these situations.
- 6 — In building partnerships with new communities, understand that they may have had very negative experiences of partnership with universities in the past and that time may be needed to address these issues and work to overcome them.
- 7 — Consider drawing on the long history of critical race theory, anti-colonial movements and anti-racism movements as resources to help understand, critique and challenge racism and unconscious bias when you encounter it in partnerships.<sup>23</sup>
- 8 — Be prepared to fight for time, space, resources and protection within the university for these partnerships to flourish – but conversely, be ready to work productively with others to create meaningful infrastructural support.

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Eddo-Lodge, R. (2017) *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

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Sullivan, S. and Tuana, N. (eds.) (2007) *Race and epistemologies of ignorance*. New York: SUNY Press

Visvanathan, S. (2009) 'The search for cognitive justice' *India Seminar: Knowledge in Question*. [www.india-seminar.com/2009/597/597\\_shiv\\_visvanathan.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2009/597/597_shiv_visvanathan.htm)

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General resources on ethical and other considerations are available: <https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/UoB-CLK-guide-3-AW.pdf>

## Academics 2: KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

Critical to productive partnerships is a willingness on the part of the university academic to be open to the expertise and ideas of partners, and to be able to articulate and understand their own expertise. At the same time, particularly in relation to partnerships with communities with which the academic is unfamiliar, there can be a degree of anxiety about the development of new relationships.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, we recommend the following practical steps:

- 1 — Ask your institution for and attend focused training in cultural competency and unconscious bias and/or seek out training and interactions within communities that do not follow current sector-speak around inclusion. Depending on the focus of your partnership, you may want to explore resources from groups such as Runnymede Trust, Advance HE (formerly the Equality Challenge Unit), the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Equality and Diversity Forum on race, discrimination, power and equity.

- 2 — Recognise what you do not know, be prepared for challenging conversations, and to listen and to learn.
- 3 — Ask whether your theoretical frameworks all originate from one cultural tradition, if so, explore how you might diversify your reading list and consult to ensure that the concepts, methods and theories deployed are relevant for the communities with which you work.
- 4 — Once projects are underway, recognise that the specialist expertise that is round the table may be articulated in ways that are not familiar in academic contexts, and explore how best to hear and understand this.
- 5 — Recognise the time and effort it takes to build credibility within communities – do not exploit this or take it for granted. Respect, fund, acknowledge and work with this expertise.
- 6 — Experiment with methods – getting beyond language and number to using audio-visual forms of data-collection can, for instance, improve research inquiry and enhance participation.
- 7 — Recognise the long traditions that already exist of collaborative, participatory and co-produced research and draw on these to help you explore the ethical and practical challenges and potential of this research.<sup>25</sup>
- 8 — Increase your investment in bringing in outside BME contributors to students' learning, including in curriculum development and review.

### Academics 3: COMMUNICATION

Clear communication is essential to good partnerships. Academics therefore need to:

- 1 — Create time and space within partnerships to enable successful communication, including to address difficult issues and to work through challenges, making sure that you are listening as well as talking.
- 2 — Be able to articulate and explain your research in succinct and accessible terms; the developments such as 3-Minute Thesis and Bright Nights are doing good work to support junior researchers, these need to be extended across all levels of experience.
- 3 — Understand what you are and are not able to offer as part of a partnership, in order to save time and energy from the beginning.
- 4 — Understand what it is that you really do well, develop ways of confidently communicating that with partners and work out how it can be useful (or not) to their interests and agendas.
- 5 — Practice and develop listening skills and cultural competency to learn to hear those whose ideas and knowledge may be expressed in ways different from your own.
- 6 — Be explicit about your own position in the institution, and about whether you have capacity to make change or are you constrained by other factors: funders, university regulations; explain what these are and help everyone understand this clearly. Where you are working in a precarious position, consider how to build longer-term contacts and networks with your partners and within the institution.

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See Connected Communities Foundation Series:  
<https://connected-communities.org/index.php/connected-communities-foundation-series/>

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**Recognise what  
you do not know,  
be prepared for  
challenging  
conversations,  
and to listen  
and to learn.**  
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#### **Academics 4: FUNDING**

The development of project proposals requires time, communication and the development of shared understanding.

- 1 — Community partners should be involved in the project development stage to ensure that there is shared understanding of aims and that everyone is clear about what it will take to deliver the project.
- 2 — Project proposals take time, meaning it may be better to miss an upcoming call for proposals than to rush in the development of a partnership.
- 3 — Ensure that you are developing a project that is fair and mutually beneficial to both partners: to test this, perhaps ask whether you would want to do this project irrespective of whether funding was available; or if you were the other party would the terms be acceptable.
- 4 — Ensure you are transparent about the costs and budgeting of a project and explore how you can address the inequalities in budget allocation between partners.
- 5 — The practical costs of delivering collaborative projects should not be forgotten – childcare, travel, room hire, food will all be required as essential costs for engaging economically marginalised communities or those with caring responsibilities.
- 6 — Where appropriate, costs for translation need to be included – ask what language you will be working in and why? Who will these choices include or exclude?
- 7 — Check with funders about where there may be flexibility for 'unusual' costs and for partner costs – university research offices are not always the experts in this process.
- 8 — Allocate more time than you expect to project partnership and administration and recognise that inclusion of project management and administration expertise can help alleviate the burden of bureaucracy on both academic and community partners.

#### **Academics 5: LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The longer-term legacy and sustainability of projects is important to consider from the outset of the partnership. Without attention to this, the full potential of partnerships cannot be realised and there is a risk that partnerships may cause harm to collaborating organisations.

To that end, it is important to:

- 1 — Think about legacy from the outset and explore with partners what will happen to the outputs from the research? Who will own it? Where will it be located? What access is desired? Review this aspect at key points during the research.
- 2 — Consider how the products of research will be connected into the wider knowledge base? How will the work be communicated to others to help them avoid reinventing the wheel? How will the materials be archived and made accessible to others?
- 3 — Consider whether commitments will need to be made to longer term partnerships beyond the bounds of project funding.

## C: Guidance for community, civil society and creative organisations

**C**ommunity organisations have very different experiences of working with universities and very different levels of resource. These recommendations, therefore, will not apply to all organisations at all times. They are intended, in the main, as prompts to reflection and to dialogue and focus around: building network, scale and sustainability; funding; time and space; knowledge and expertise. In this way, they mirror many of the recommendations for academic and university partners. They should be read in conjunction with the guidance from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement and the Community-University Partner Network which provides useful more general advice for community organisations wishing to work with universities.<sup>26</sup> Here we focus less on these wider concerns and more specifically on the issues facing BME organisations in particular.

Specifically, prior to any engagement with universities, BME communities should gauge the extent to which a particular university is culturally competent or even receptive to the value of different perspectives and expertise. Some indications of this can be given by looking at the university's plans and initiatives around race equality and reducing structural racism, in addition to investigating various curriculum offerings. Even with these plans and agendas in place, a university may still be interested in funding or participating in a particular activity due to past (or present) instances of racialised neglect and institutional discrimination. Despite this, no planning will be able to ensure that BME communities will never encounter subtle expressions of microaggression or blatant prejudice/stereotypes. These apprehensions cannot be allayed by institutional sound bites but through the quality and transparency of the interactions and a deep commitment to equitable partnerships, a commitment that needs to be discussed and tested at the earliest stages of discussions.

### Community 1: BUILDING NETWORKS, SCALE AND SUSTAINABILITY

A commonly repeated concern amongst project participants in the study was whether partnerships and projects were building sustainable infrastructures and capacity in BME communities. Indeed, there was a concern that these projects were poorly interconnected and failing to build a shared knowledge base. To address this, recommendations arising from participants in the project include:

- 1 — Moving beyond competitive relationships with other organisations to developing networks that can provide knowledge sharing and mutual support.
- 2 — Develop consortia for ambitious large-scale projects that can make a big difference.
- 3 — Recognise, learn from and connect up with international networks who are working to recognise and build knowledge from outside universities, in particular with indigenous rights movements.<sup>27</sup>

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<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/connect-with-others/uk-community-partner-network>

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Here are just a few groups and organisations developing different models of knowledge production and research:

The Towards Decolonial Futures Network

<http://blogs.ubc.ca/towardsdecolonialfutures/>

The work of the UNESCO Chairs on Community Based Research

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=23057>

The Action Learning/Action Research Network

<https://www.alarassociation.org/?q=about-us>

The Shikshantar Network

<http://shikshantar.org/communities-practice/ecoversities-network>

The Enlivened Learning Network

<http://enlivenedlearning.com/>

The Canadian Community-University Partnerships Groups

<https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/en/toolbox/community-university-research-partnerships-reflections>

- 4 — Ensure that projects are seen as part of a bigger picture and that they have the opportunity and responsibility to contribute to a wider public not just to project participants.
- 5 — Ensure that all projects build capacity rather than generate activity. Ensure that there is a longer-term legacy from the work and walk away if the terms and conditions are exploitative.
- 6 — Agree what will happen to materials at the end of the project: who will own them, who will have the right to access them, who will benefit from them financially?

### Community 2: FUNDING

The development of robust funding proposals is essential to partnership working and to the creation of projects that are effective, useful and meaningful to community organisations. To that end, we recommend:

- 1 — Building relationships with funding bodies – ask for advice, find out if there are local officers who can work with you to develop bids, speak to them early about ideas and get feedback. Check the assumptions you have about the scale of funding you can bid for.
- 2 — Ensure you are involved in the early stage of project development if it is being led from a university and that you understand what is being proposed. Ask your partners to clarify anything that is unclear, to share budget information and to be aware of the costs you will face in delivering the project.
- 3 — Recognise your strengths and expertise and ensure that involvement in any project furthers your organisation goals and builds capacity and/or that the organisation is sufficiently and appropriately remunerated for the work being done.
- 4 — If projects are based on using assets (knowledge, space, facilities) that have been developed by your organisation through volunteer or other activities, ensure that there are costs associated in the bid to recognise your contribution of these.
- 5 — If being asked by funders or universities to provide regular and ongoing advice in relation to questions of diversity to other projects, organisations and individuals, ask for resource to cover the time involved.
- 6 — Consider whether volunteering as a model is appropriate for your participants or whether additional costs will be needed to remunerate them for their time.
- 7 — Consider whether additional costs will be required for translation or other means of facilitating communication and understanding.
- 8 — Be clear about which communities you can work with in relation to your areas of expertise and do not feel pressured into volunteering to work with other communities than your interests and expertise allows.

### Community 3: TIME AND SPACE

As with academics and university recommendations above, the way that space and time is used in the development of projects is essential. Therefore:

- 1 — Consider entering new spaces and partnerships with others and with allies rather than in isolation in order to build confidence and ensure that your voices are heard.
- 2 — Question your partners about whether conducting meetings and activities on university premises is essential or whether other spaces might be proposed that would provide better welcome for all community participants and allow all involved in research to feel respected and equal.
- 3 — Be prepared for difficult conversations, to listen and to learn.
- 4 — Do not accept short timescales as a basis for not being involved in bid development processes, and suggest delay or improved communications.

### Community 4: KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

The knowledge and expertise of community and cultural organisations can sometimes be undervalued by partners. A key challenge for organisations therefore is to ensure that they retain confidence in what they know and are able to find ways to ensure that this expertise is valued and recognised.

- 1 — Before seeking partnerships, be clear about the expertise and knowledge that you have as an individual and an organisation and develop accessible ways of communicating this to those unfamiliar with your area of interest.
- 2 — Before seeking partnerships, be clear about the assets and resources that you and your organisation bring – whether intellectual property or longstanding and trusted relationships with communities as well as more material resources. Explore whether these are assets you are willing to share in terms of a mutually beneficial partnership, and on what basis, or whether these are resources for which you should be remunerated in the project.
- 3 — Before seeking partnership, consider what you are looking for from the university and ask whether they are able to offer this and/or whether other partners and organisations might be better and more productive collaborators.
- 4 — Consider drawing on the long history of critical race theory, anti-colonial movements, anti-racism movements as resources to help understand, critique and challenge racism and unconscious bias when you encounter it in partnerships.
- 5 — Build networks and alliances to support you to challenge academics on these behaviours when these occur.
- 6 — If your knowledge and expertise is not being acknowledged, be prepared for difficult conversations and if necessary to walk away from partnerships, documenting and reporting the experience in university and/or funder monitoring procedures.

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A key challenge for community organisations is to ensure that they retain confidence in what they know and are able to find ways to ensure that this expertise is valued and recognised.  
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- 7 — Recognise that large public organisations such as national libraries and museums are accountable to their publics and have responsibilities towards accessibility and engagement with diverse communities. Gaining access can be as simple as requesting library and access cards.
- 8 — Explore the potential of your contribution to research being recognised in the form of a research fellowship with the university or contributions to other areas of university work. Partnerships drawing on your expertise may extend in many different directions – you may want to consider if any of these are of interest or use to you.

## D: Guidance for funding bodies and funding infrastructure organisations

**T**he project has raised key questions about how amenable funders are to supporting research projects and partnerships with Black and Minority Ethnic communities, and whether these communities find funders approachable or responsive to proposals. The influence and significance of funding bodies and funding infrastructure organisations cannot be underestimated in terms of their capacity to shape the landscape for community–university partnerships and to set a new standard for race equality in research and partnerships. To achieve this will require funding bodies to learn from each other about where best practice and innovative practice exists, to ask hard questions about the balance between project and infrastructure funding, to set clear expectations and standards for universities and communities, to reflect on their own institutional make-up and governance. The accessibility of funders and communication with them can present obstacles to organisations, artists and community groups from the UK’s Black and Minority Ethnic communities. Funders should take a lead in proactively developing partnerships, not least because they have the resources to facilitate this. Such developments are not unachievable and there is much good practice to learn from.

### Funders 1: INNOVATE AND LEARN

Central to the development of a research landscape that reflects the expertise and knowledge of the UK’s Black and Minority Ethnic communities, is the need for funders to reflect on their current practice and share insights into how to improve. Recommendations here therefore include:

- 1 — Funders of all types need to recognise that innovation in methods is essential to diversifying participation in the research process. The intention should be to encourage such experimentation and critical reflection upon such experimentation with a view to developing a new understanding of what ‘excellent’ research looks like when funders engage with diverse communities.
- 2 — Existing informal arrangements between funders to share best practice and learning in this area need to be strengthened by identifying this facilitation of collective learning across the sector as a core responsibility for the UKRI Advisory Group on equality, diversity and inclusion, possibly in partnership with the Equality Challenge Unit

- 3 — Funders need to study and understand the impact of recent innovations — such as Wellcome’s provision of additional funding for diversity and inclusion activities; the British Library’s ‘research affiliates’ scheme; the AHRC’s two-stage funding models and Connected Communities Programme; the role of the HLF’s local officers.
- 4 — The UKRI EDI Advisory Group in partnership with the wider sector should agree a common language and terminology to enable public monitoring of participation by ethnicity in grant funding processes. The current confused situation means that there is no possibility to develop any comparisons between funders or to learn lessons from those where significant gains are being made in terms of opening up participation.
- 5 — Capacity building must be a priority alongside innovation. This means that staff should actively engage in initiatives that allow them to train, support and employ staff that reflect the ethnic diversity of their local community; there should be clear targets for diversity of staff make-up and for membership of assessment panels and trustees; and the make-up of the staff body should be visibly and actively reported by funders in their own public facing materials with UK/international staff distinctions clarified.
- 6 — All staff should have easy access to and be encouraged to participate in race equality training and materials that move beyond ‘unconscious bias’ training, such as ‘Let’s Talk about Race’ (from Business in the Community).

## **Funders 2: FUNDING INFRASTRUCTURES NOT JUST PROJECTS**

A common theme identified in our workshops and case studies has been the relative precarity and weakness of the BME community and cultural sector and the need for sustainable infrastructure investment and capacity building. Historical under-investment, a terrain of inequality and the demonstrably disproportionate impact of funding cuts and austerity are key contributors to this situation. This also relates to a recurrent theme identified in the project in which universities holding research funding tends to reproduce unequal power relationships within partnerships. Funders can play an important role in beginning to address these issues:

- 1 — Resource should be re-allocated away from project-based funding to support infrastructure development proposals that will enable networking, brokering and large-scale interventions that build sectoral capacity.
- 2 — Whilst short-term project funding is required to support focused activity, additional resource should be allocated to permit longer-term partnership building and development.
- 3 — Funding proposals should be evaluated by the extent to which they will build capacity in partnering organisations and leave them strengthened.
- 4 — Funding proposals should be evaluated by the extent to which they will make a contribution to a wider public knowledge base, ensuring that questions of legacy and sustainability and future access to the knowledge are addressed from the outset of the project. If such activity requires additional resource, this should be added to the initial proposal.

- 5 — Funders receiving multiple proposals from small organisations might want to play an active role in facilitating and enabling networking and scaling up of community-based activities, and actively funding such facilitation work.
- 6 — Capacity building rather than just projects should be a priority. Current scholarship provision should be diversified to support PhD study from community members who may have followed a non-traditional educational pathway; co-supervision between organisations and universities; and follow-on post-doctoral funding should be offered to support transition into academic careers.
- 7 — There should be coordinated action to fund and support a national database of centres (we are aware of at least 58) focused on race and equality in HEIs in order to develop a strategic approach to maintaining and strengthening these centres as part of a collective intervention in the sector.
- 8 — A strategic approach is required between funders to address the question of project archiving and to examine how the findings from projects can be collated and made searchable and researchable across the country in places and through approaches that BME communities feel able to access. There is an important role to be played here by the British Library and Wellcome's existing work on digitisation of archives and materials may also be supportive of this initiative.

### Funders 3: BROKERAGE AND MEDIATION

Funders have the potential to encourage the development of new partnerships between BME community organisations and academics both through the funding process and within the projects that they fund themselves.

- 1 — Funding opportunities should explicitly seek to broker new forms of relationships between academics and individuals and groups from BME communities. To this end, there is a need for the identification of more equitable, respectful and welcoming spaces that are not dominated by any particular group of people. These should not take the form of residential 'sandpits' (as this generates other exclusions that funders are encouraged to address), but could constitute shorter 'town hall' meetings, where introductions are made and participants encouraged to find out about each other's interests. When developing the invitation list for such activities, as well as ensuring that there is sufficient and strong presence from BME communities, it should be acknowledged that some community organisations may wish to bring more than one participant for moral support in a novel environment. Such environments should be facilitated by experts with a demonstrable understanding of issues of race equality and a capacity to broker and facilitate open conversations.
- 2 — Funders should build a list of brokers and mediators with strong links into diverse communities and actively resource them to engage with and facilitate dialogue between funders, universities and these communities. In parallel, such brokerage expertise and cultural competency should be developed and appropriately resourced in-house.

- 3 — The distinctive roles of brokers and mediators needs to be recognised and accepted as part of project costings from applicants, and peer review processes need to value this as a priority in proposal assessment.
- 4 — The Common Cause Networks being established with leadership from Runnymede will provide a useful building block to identify and support mediators, brokers and potential applicants for funding.<sup>28</sup>

#### Funders 4: TRANSPARENCY AND CREDIBILITY

There was doubt amongst BME community participants in the case studies that funding bodies would welcome proposals from their communities or that they would fund them to a sufficient level. This urgently requires attention and we make five key recommendations in this area to build trust in the fairness of funding processes and credibility in the process:

- 1 — The criteria for eligibility for applications for large grants need to be made more explicit.
- 2 — The commitment to there being no discrimination in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, language or cultural tradition needs to be made explicitly and operationalised in grant awarding processes, including in peer review.
- 3 — Funding panels, decision-making panels, and trust/council governors/trustees need to reflect the diversity of the UK population.
- 4 — Publish data on the ethnic make-up of decision-making bodies and on the outcomes in terms of application-award success.
- 5 — Make more explicit the strategies around equality, diversity and inclusion and their relationship to community partnering, civil society interactions and the make-up of research teams.

#### Funders 5: SET EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS

Funding bodies have the opportunity both to set and raise standards in terms of the development of race equality in the research landscape. They can do this in the following ways:

- Publish examples of successful proposals to enable new entrants to the field to have a sense of what constitutes success.
- Challenge proposals that fail to demonstrate a clear understanding of ethical partnership working, using the 'fair and mutual research principles' as a resource.
- Challenge proposals where letters of support show limited evidence of benefit from the project or understanding of project aims and goals.
- Recognise that high-quality proposals will not necessarily need to 'represent' all BME communities and that highly specialised and focused projects may demonstrate an equally important contribution to both the research landscape and the participating community partners.

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Details about the networks are available at: <https://www.commoncauseresearch.com/get-involved/>

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**The influence of funding bodies and funding infrastructure organisations cannot be underestimated in their capacity to set a new standard for race equality in the research and partnerships.**  
 \*

- Provide clear guidance that funding is available to support economically marginalised communities to attend and participate in collaborative projects – including for travel costs, subsistence, childcare – recognising that such payments may need to be made on an **ad hoc** basis to preclude excluding people on the basis of not being able to complete the relevant paperwork.
- Recommend a minimum of £250 per person per day payment for community and cultural organisations, ensuring that payments should reflect the nature and amount of work needed and enabling contributions to overhead costs.
- Do not require all community partner organisations to make a ‘contribution in kind’ and do not allow contributions in kind to be used as a means of valuing research proposal quality as this risks excluding many Black and Minority Ethnic community organisations.
- Recognise the increased time required for collaborative projects – this includes administrative time, engagement and dialogue time, and translation costs that do not seem to directly contribute to the bid delivery but which are fundamental underpinnings for this work.
- Ask all proposals to demonstrate how the proposed project will build the capacity and contribute to the sustainability of the partnering organisation above and beyond generating short-term income to cover costs.
- Ensure community organisations are enabled to cover core costs as part of their day rates.

## E: Guidance for other national bodies

**A** number of other national bodies have been identified as playing a significant enabling or impeding role to research collaborations between universities and BME communities. There are several specific recommendations for these actors that if taken, would play an important role in changing the wider cultural conditions within which these projects are developed.

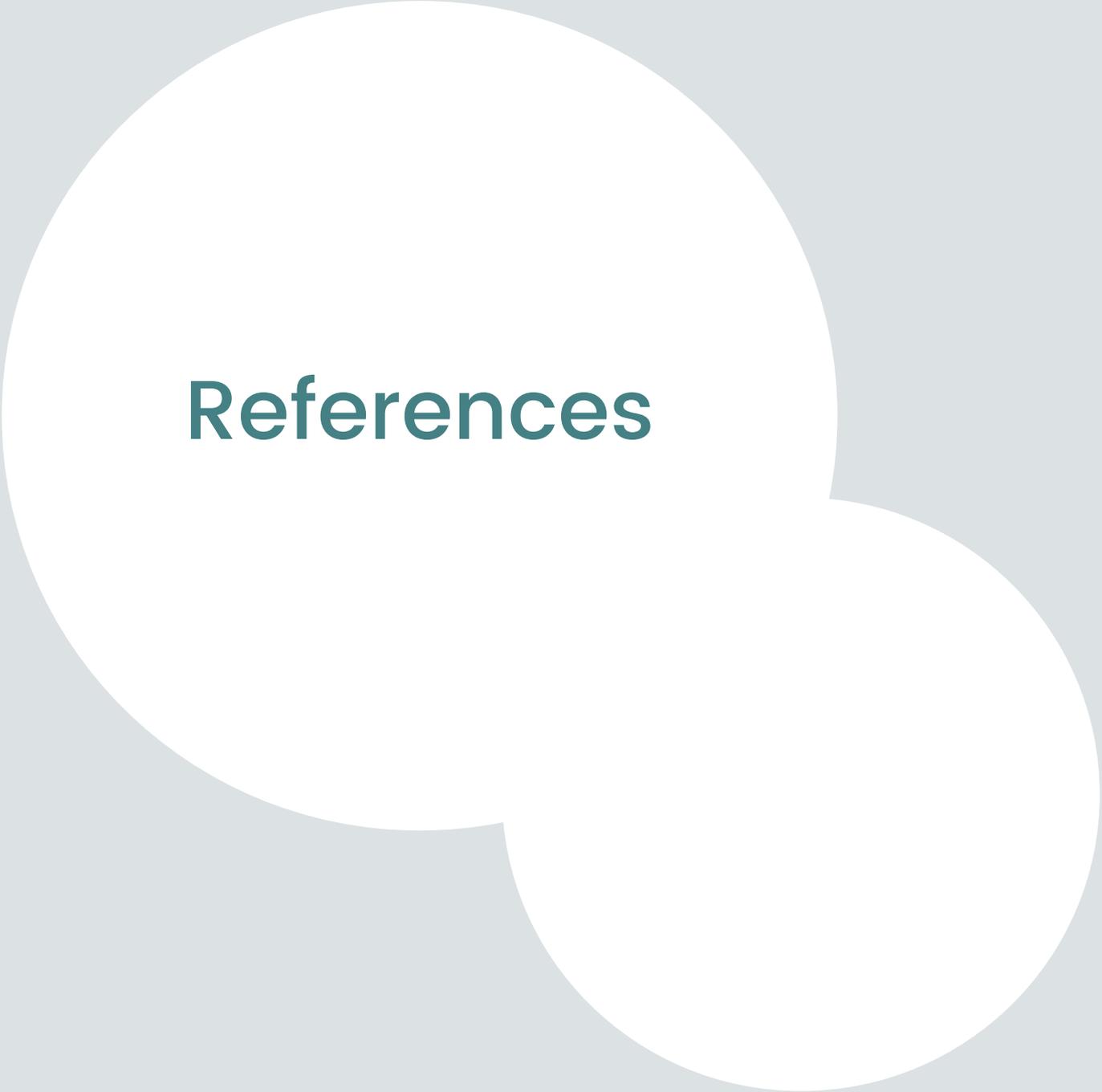
- 1 — The Race Equality Charter should be expanded to address the issue of research partnerships in higher education. Responsibility: Equality Challenge Unit.
- 2 — The REF, TEF and KEF frameworks should explicitly examine the implications of their metrics for race equality and consider introducing new ones where deemed appropriate as recommended by, for example, the Forum for Responsible Research Metrics. Responsibility: Research England and other funding councils responsible for REF.
- 3 — The emerging KEF framework should recognise the potential of smaller, cultural and community organisations to play an important role in the development of research and in the production of two-way knowledge exchange. Metrics that value only large-scale commercialisation and intellectual property will have a detrimental effect on the willingness and support of universities to engage in community-engaged research. Responsibility: Research England and consulting group on the KEF.

- 4 — The impact of Home Office visa restrictions and permission to work policies on the development of partnerships between universities and community organisations should be addressed at the most senior level. Responsibility: Department for Education/Home Office.
- 5 — The new concordat on research should address questions of race equality. Responsibility: Vitae.
- 6 — The NCCPE's institutional benchmarking for public engagement should include questions of race equality and develop appropriate indicators and metrics. Responsibility: NCCPE.
- 7 — The Higher Education Academy and related university schemes to develop excellent teaching should strengthen their focus on race equality. Responsibility: HEA.
- 8 — The UKRI should develop a clear terminology for and publish national statistics on levels of BME participation (both academic and partner) in the research process. Responsibility: UKRI.
- 9 — The NCCPE and Runnymede (amongst others) should explore the potential to develop a nationwide programme of training around unconscious bias and cultural competency in the research process: Responsibility: NCCPE and Runnymede.
- 10 — NCCPE's participatory ethics framework should be reviewed to take account of questions of race and ethnicity. Responsibility: NCCPE.
- 11 — The Office for Students should consider making race equality and representative staffing a requirement for continued rights to levy student fees at the highest rate given how critical this is to achieving aspirations to widening participation and addressing any disproportionate divergencies in degree attainment across racialised and ethnic categories. Responsibility: OfS.



**Together, these principles and recommendations will ensure that research collaborations make a major contribution to strengthening the long-term capacity of Black and Minority Ethnic organisations and communities to build powerful knowledge today and in the future.**





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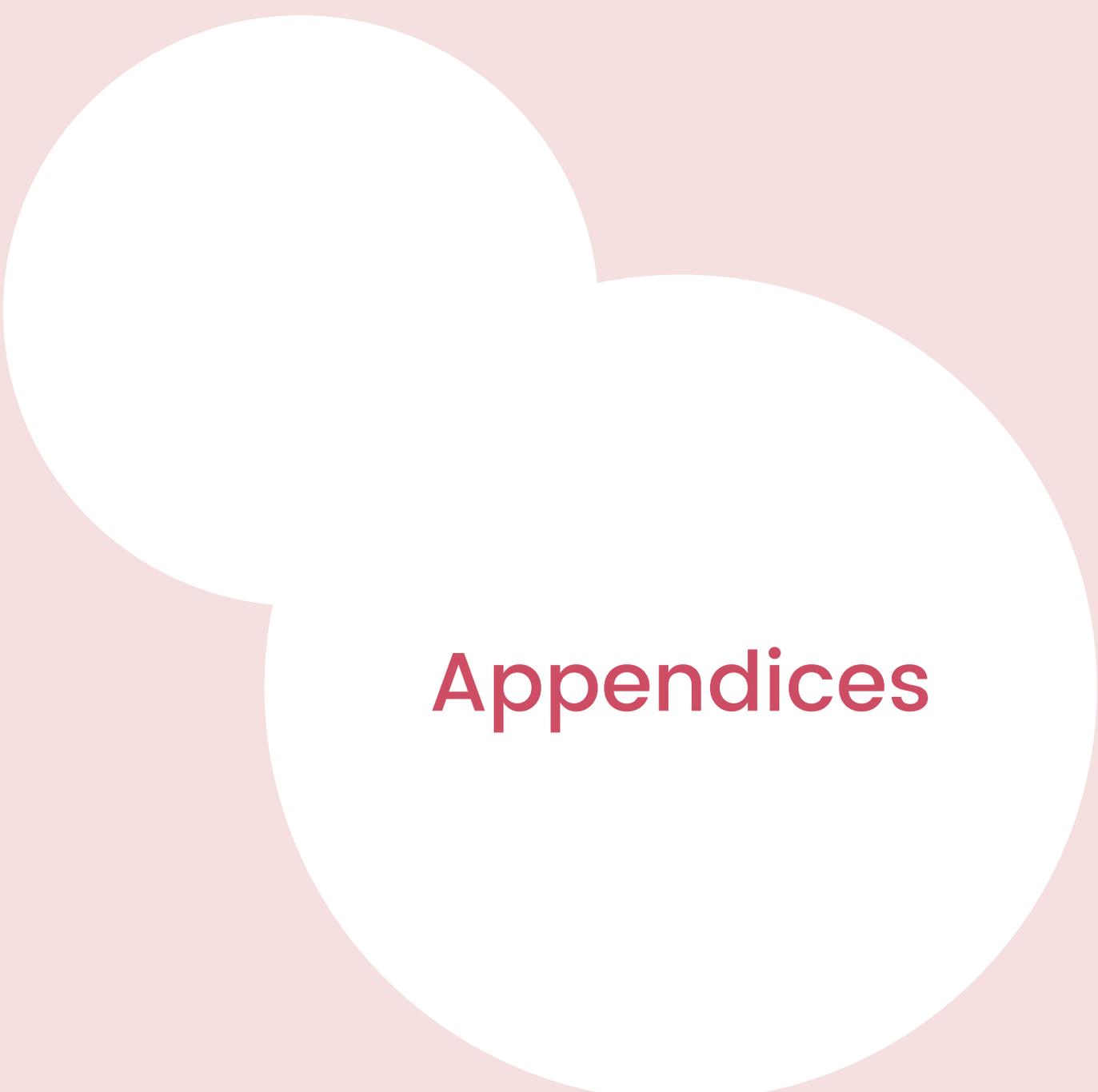
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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Methods of data collection and analysis

### Phase 1: Database and survey

A database of collaborative research projects between universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities was the key product from Phase 1 of the project. Conducted between October 2016 and March 2017, this represents our earliest research into the past and present landscape of collaborative Arts and Humanities research projects conducted by racialised and Ethnic Minority community organisations and universities.

Our initial plans were to scour funding databases for project information – such as the comprehensive Gateway to Research and the databases of individual funders, such as AHRC and Heritage Lottery Fund – but this proved difficult to triangulate terms and to ensure accuracy. For example, we found the same project in multiple databases, but with different titles and project partners listed. After discussing these difficulties with the research team and the Advisory Board, we decided to work systematically through Researchfish and Gateway to Research using terms utilized in the census, as well as broad terms such as “culture”.

A shared data handling agreement with AHRC provided us with additional project data that we could then begin to organize into a new database of collaborative projects. To complete some information that we determined (through consultation with our Advisory Board) as essential to know about the partnerships, we extended our investigations to additional platforms and material, including project and university websites, publicly available reports and exhibitions, a survey and face-to-face or virtual exchanges with interested participants or contributors.

We utilised a suite of investigative tools – including literature reviews, narrative inquiry and visual analysis – in order to determine collaborative practice. Through these mixed methodologies we identified over 100 projects that suggested a collaboration between a BME arts, cultural or civic sector organisation and a university. From this list, we refined, as much as we could through an analysis of available public data, the extent and depth of these collaborations. Removing repeated entries and projects that researched on communities, produced a final list of 86 collaborative projects. These projects formed the pool of case studies that would inform the make-up of the more focused case studies of Phase 2.

We also assembled a comprehensive list of 58 university-based research centres that are leading in this area and may be central to the production of collaborative research with BME communities. This list was formed from initial scoping by colleagues at the University of Nottingham in 2015 and then added to through tracking of information contained in publicly available websites, through listserves and networks of the project team, through press releases of projects, exhibitions and publications and through word of mouth. Although we did not investigate the identities of the scholars participating within these centres, we do think that this is an important issue for future research.

## Phase 2: Case studies

The aim of Phase 2 was to undertake interviews with up to 50 interviewees to co-create a 'case study/report' on examples of collaboration, drawing out key insights for contemporary researchers and funders of research. The purpose of this phase of activity, as outlined in the proposal, was to generate information that would:

- Provide a robust insight into the multiple factors that impact university – Black and Minority Ethnic community collaborations; in particular, disentangling those factors that are common features of all community-university collaborations and those that are particularly a produce of race, culture and identity questions.
- Provide a set of case studies that can illustrate the contributions of these collaborations to the body of knowledge and practice in the Arts and Humanities.
- Produce a set of podcasts (changed to films) from these case studies that can be used to engage new communities in research collaborations.
- Deepen the historical timeline to identify key factors that have driven collaborative partnerships.

After Common Cause Research got under way, it was decided that up to 25 projects would be selected for development as case studies based on interviews with an academic partner and a community partner for each project. The projects would be selected from the work undertaken in Phase 1. Over 100 projects were identified through the survey and 86 of these were identified as relevant to Common Cause Research, as at March 2017; that is, the available information indicated that these projects were a research collaboration in the Arts and Humanities between universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities. It was anticipated that further projects would continue to be identified after this date, however selection of projects for development as case studies was made from the 86 projects identified as relevant by March 2017.

### Selection of projects

The key focus for selection of projects was to achieve as broad a representation as possible in terms of geographic location across the UK and Black and Minority Ethnic communities participating in the projects. It was acknowledged from the outset that a focus on 25 projects would not facilitate achieving a representative sample across the UK; nevertheless, useful insights could be gained by co-creating case studies to establish a better understanding about university-Black and Minority Ethnic community collaborative research in the Arts and Humanities. The issue of achieving some representation was further exacerbated by the challenges encountered in Phase 1 to identify information about projects relevant to Common Cause Research; information in the public domain about specific BME communities collaborating in projects was patchy. Furthermore, the 86 projects identified showed there was a greater concentration of projects in some regions than others and several projects were collaborations between the same universities and community organisations.

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**The key focus for selection of projects was to achieve as broad a representation as possible in terms of geographic location across the UK and Black and Minority Ethnic communities participating in the projects.**

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After discussion by the project team it was decided that selection of projects should be undertaken in stages, with a review after the first 10 project interviews to ensure obtaining as wide a range of views as possible. It was also decided that two to three projects should be approached early to be interviewed as pilots to test the methodology and interview schedule.

A list of 56 projects, for which the most information was available, was compiled with the intention that if any projects contacted were unable to participate, then it would be possible to work through the list until 25 projects were recruited. The first 29 projects on this list more closely matched the selection criteria of achieving geographic spread and inclusion of diverse Black and Minority Ethnic community collaborators; those further down the list would impact on achieving geographic and diverse Black and Minority Ethnic community representation.

Note on Northern Ireland and East of England for which there are no case studies:

- 1 — There were no projects identified in Northern Ireland in the Phase 1 database so this area is not represented. This is something that requires further follow up in future work in this area.
- 2 — There were only two projects in the database for East of England: These either duplicated existing partners selected for interview in relation to other projects or were unable to participate.

### Recruitment of projects and interviewees

The contact details for projects identified in Phase 1 mostly provided the name of the lead organisation or researcher, predominantly the university and academic Principal Investigator of the project and other academic researchers were identified if this information was available. Community organisations were listed where this information was available, but no specific named person due to the challenges encountered in Phase 1 as described above. Occasionally a community partner was named as the lead organisation, possibly because they initiated the project or secured the funding (for example, 60 Untold Stories of Black Britain and the Chinese Digital Storytelling Project). Therefore, after projects were selected another separate exercise had to be undertaken to search for and establish contact details for partners before projects could be approached.

Three projects for whom contact details were available due to personal contacts within the project team, were selected as pilots to test the methodology, before proceeding with further recruitment. This exercise, undertaken between late March and April 2017, provided an early indication of challenges relating to recruitment of projects.

### — Pilot project 1

#### **(Building the Bridge: Muslim engagement in Bristol)**

An interview with the academic partner was conducted, the project had been completed in January 2015 but it was impossible to locate an appropriate community partner for interview. The steering group brought together to oversee delivery of the project had disbanded, several people on this group had moved jobs and there were no contact details available for other community participants who could potentially be interviewed. This project was therefore omitted as a potential case study.

### — Pilot project 2 (Southall Story)

Both academic and community partners were interested in participating but were not available to participate within the timescale for conducting pilot case studies. This project was omitted as a pilot but developed as a case study at a later stage.

### — Pilot project 3 (Minding Black Histories)

Both academic and community partners agreed to participate and the case study developed, was included as one of the Common Cause Research case studies.

Some minimal amendments were made to the interview schedule for greater clarity based on this pilot phase and one further criteria for selection of projects added; that a project could only be recruited if the community partner was available and agreed to participate. Recruitment of further projects commenced in May 2017. A total of 40 projects were contacted between May and October 2017 in three phases, four of these projects through word of mouth introductions.

— 14 projects were contacted in May with the intention, to conduct 10 project interviews and then review selection of further projects. However, this initial recruitment phase highlighted the lengthy process involved between contacting potential participants and receiving confirmation as to whether or not they could participate. It was therefore decided to bring forward recruitment of further projects and not wait until interviews with the first 10 projects were completed.

— A further 10 projects were contacted in early June 2017 and one word of mouth introduction made in July (Intercultural Creativity).

— A review of those contacted in the previous two phases was undertaken in July and a further nine projects were contacted in early August. Three word of mouth introductions were followed up, two in September and one in October.

An introductory email was sent to the contact person identified for each potential case study project, including: a short briefing about Common Cause Research and details about what participation in developing a case study entailed; the option to participate in making a short film about the collaboration; and an invitation to take part. Those indicating they wanted to participate were sent the interview schedule, consent form and an indication of the likely time and input required from them. The person initially contacted was, in most cases, the academic partner but whichever partner was the first point of contact had to first check the other partner's availability and interest in participating. Additionally, some people sought approval from other colleagues connected to the project or senior management/trustees, the latter especially being the case for community partners.

At the end of August 2017, 15 projects had been recruited and it was clear that this was a lengthy process. After establishing contact there was a further period of time before participation could be confirmed, followed by more time to book in interviews. Therefore, it was decided in September 2017 that further recruitment of projects could not be facilitated within the available timescale and recruitment through the list compiled from data generated in Phase 1, was ceased. A further three projects, introduced directly by word of mouth, were recruited; two in September 2017 and one in October 2017.

A total of 19 projects were recruited and at least one academic and one community partner for each project participated in developing their case studies. Interviews were conducted between March 2017 and February 2018. There are several reasons why many of those contacted between May and August could not participate.

- Contact was never established because there was no response to the initial and follow-up email sent. Some people had moved jobs, others were on long-term leave. (7)
- After establishing contact the project was described as not being a collaboration and so was out of scope for the research. (4)
- Initial interest was expressed but then no response to follow up emails or phone calls. (3)
- Timescale of Common Cause combined with other duties and commitments was not conducive to participation. (2)
- Community partner not available to participate. (2)
- Capacity issues resulting in a focus on only doing work that could generate income. (1)
- The project was not a research collaboration, the focus was on widening participation. (1)

The interviewees volunteered their time to participate, no payments or other incentives were offered. We may therefore also assume that the lack of resource to cover participation may have negatively impacted involvement in some cases.

## Data collection

Qualitative, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with at least one academic and one community partner for each project. An interview schedule was developed outlining the broad headings for discussion in the interview. The aim of the interviews was to generate information that would tell the story of how the collaboration came about, was planned and undertaken, outputs and legacies from the project, impact of broader factors such as structural inequalities, and any future plans to sustain the work or collaborate on other projects. Interview participants were encouraged to tell the story of their project in the way that suited them and to talk about relevant issues not covered in the interview schedule.

Factual data about interviewees, university or community organisation and the project was compiled beforehand where this information was available. This data was checked with interviewees and any gaps filled in with them before the interview commenced.

Academic and community participants were given the option of being interviewed separately and requests for joint interviews were also accommodated. Some participants opted for telephone interviews due to practical or time constraints. In total this led to 22 individual face-to-face interviews, three joint face-to-face interviews, eight telephone interviews and one group discussion with multiple participants.

## Compiling the case studies

The intention in producing the case studies was to facilitate the interviewees to co-create these as much as possible within recognised time constraints. The key stages were:

- Face-to-face interviews were audio recorded and telephone interviews recorded by hand.
- Data in each interview transcript was collated under the main headings outlined in the interview schedule.
- Background information about the project, community organisation and university participating in the interview was accessed before and after the interview from online documents and any hard copies provided by interviewees. This data was used to compile an introduction to the case study and include relevant links to online information throughout the case study.
- Background information and data from interviews was compiled into a case study draft 1 and sent to academic and community interviewees at the same time, for their comment and feedback.
- The feedback received was incorporated into draft 2 and returned to the interviewees for a final edit and sign off.
- The signed-off case studies were copy-edited and set out in a template, including photographs. This version was sent to interviewees for a final check ahead of upload to the Common Cause Research website.

Participants were informed from the outset that themes emerging from across all case studies would be presented in a separate report, which would also incorporate data highlighted as sensitive and non-attributable in an anonymised format. Interviewees had the option to highlight any data as sensitive and non-attributable, or which they did not want included in any document, during the interview and also at draft 1 stage of the case study.

### Short films

Interviewees were also given the option to participate in making a short film about their project to accompany the case study. Those indicating they were happy to be contacted about this on their consent form were introduced to a film company appointed to do this work. The film company liaised directly with participants to arrange dates and venues for filming. A rough cut of the film was sent to participants for comment and sign off before being finalised for upload to the Common Cause Research website. 14 of the 19 projects participated in producing a short film about their collaboration.

### Phase 3: Workshops

Six workshops were held between June 2017 and January 2018 alongside the case study interviews. The aim of the workshops was to discuss the opportunities and barriers to collaboration between Black and Minority Ethnic communities and universities. The workshops were advertised through Runnymede networks and through Connected Communities networks, as well as by word of mouth and online Eventbrite promotion. The workshops were intended both as a means of building new networks between individuals and groups who might wish to develop collaborations in future and as a means of understanding past experiences and current issues and aspirations. The workshops were facilitated by David Bryan. Each event included introductions, discussions of shared experiences, an explicit encouragement to talk about the specific issues facing BME communities in this area, and presentations from previous projects.

The workshops were held in Birmingham, Nottingham, London, Liverpool, Nottingham and Cardiff. They involved the following participant make-up:

- 34 Community/arts organisations.
- 3 Working across university and community organisations.
- 16 Independent artists, activists, community-based researchers, other professionals.
- 2 Government – 1 Communities and Local Government and 1 European Civil Servant.
- 19 University academic and professional services staff.
- 5 University students.
- 10 non-specified (Cardiff).

\*  
**Six workshops were held between June 2017 and January 2018 alongside the case study interviews. The aim of the workshops was to discuss the opportunities and barriers to collaboration between Black and Minority Ethnic communities and universities.**  
\*

Workshops were not audio recorded to ensure that all participants were comfortable to speak freely in the space. However, one member of the project team was always present to take field notes. Below we provide a summary of the themes that emerged from the five workshops held in Nottingham, London, Liverpool, Birmingham and Glasgow and that formed the basis for discussions with the Advisory Board in January 2018. They are not a direct transcription of discussions and should be seen as the emerging themes from these discussions rather than a formal summary of what took place in these events. They were used to complement and enrich our understandings of the case studies and to locate the case studies in a bigger picture and are included here primarily to show how emerging themes in the workshops correlate with the themes emerging in the case study interviews.

## 1. Engaging Black and Minority Ethnic communities

- Learning about collaborative work should be shared through horizontal community engagement but there is no capacity for this.
- Address 'silo mentality' – communities no longer fit the stereotypes and impressions some people still hold, they have integrated and embraced new lifestyles and ways of being.
- Minority Ethnic communities do not always engage in collaboration from a race and ethnicity perspective and can view labelling all collaborations in this context as marginalising.
- Communities can be brought in to universities as a one-off, limited to delivering an activity such as drumming or during Black History Month but otherwise remain on the periphery.

## 2. Factors that would deter people from engaging with universities

- Immediate response when people make contact, negative response at the outset. Reach the wrong person, 'tormentor', and it's a horrific experience.
- Paperwork and funding bids can take a long time to complete and are labour intensive. Community groups can find this difficult to engage with, including for reasons of capacity.
- Language – there are particular ways of communicating such as via emails and people on either side can decide on the basis of early communication whether they will collaborate.
- Re-interpreting and re-branding ideas from communities to suit the university.
- Academic theories and related approaches can be "flowery and irrelevant" for community groups, they need to be more down to earth for engaging and working with communities.
- Inflated costs for working with community groups – there can be more money for the university at the expense of community partners. The collaboration can be seen as a business opportunity which does not always benefit community groups to the same extent as universities.

- People are not always open-minded, there seem to be no-go areas for academics and they may want a narrow focus on research that suits their own knowledge and experience.
- University culture is very white middle class. Community groups need to be conscious about how particular universities treat their Black staff. How do you find this out before a PhD student informs you? Can you find out what the race equality situation is in the university/particular department?
- Universities recruit diverse students but don't necessarily have an interest in BME communities or local/national issues relating to race.
- The more people document issues encountered the greater the evidence base that can be used and built on to highlight the situation and what needs to be done.

### 3. Heterogeneous communities, organisations and collaborations

- Race and ethnicity – generic terminology does not help assess who is engaged or not.
- Generic issues impact on Minority Ethnic communities plus factors specific to race and ethnicity (e.g. knowledge, experience and skills of brokers).
- Not all university collaborations with Minority Ethnic communities focus on race and ethnicity.
- Size of community organisations and resources available to them vary and are relevant to participation in collaborative research.

### 4. Knowledge about university-community collaborations

- Limited for those who have not collaborated.
- Views about 'research'/related approaches can be a barrier to interest in the topic.
- Difficulties identifying and accessing relevant information/potential opportunities.

### 5. Establishing links with universities

- Lack of information about how to establish contact.
- Difficult to locate relevant university department/individual – "lottery".
- Initial encounters can be difficult – from reception upwards.
- Power dynamics – perceived and actual can be a barrier.
- Broker role described as vital to establish links and support collaborations.

## 6. Creating an environment for developing effective collaborations

- Initial negotiations should be based on open and honest conversations.
- Relationships are vital – building mutual trust, respect and knowledge.
- Language and communication should be accessible to all participants.
- Developing shared vision, aims and objectives.
- Insufficient time and resources are made available to address these issues.

## 7. Communities as core participants in development of research and funding bids

- Communities can be an 'afterthought' in academic development of bids.
- Named partners can be unaware they are named.
- Communities approached after research topics/questions/methods formulated.
- Expectation of communities to provide free/low cost collaboration.

## 8. What is researched and with whom?

- Research topics are influenced by available funding.
- Chance encounters and established contacts influence who collaborates.
- Differences in university and community understanding of research/methodologies raise questions regarding what is considered as valid research and how topics are researched.
- Current models and approaches to funding and research require an overhaul.

## 9. Valuing community knowledge, expertise and contributions

- Insufficient recognition and acknowledgement of knowledge, skills, experience, networks and assets that communities bring to the table.
- Knowledge by experience should be recognised on an equal footing with academic knowledge and experience.
- Academic theories and theoretical approaches are not always relevant to community knowledge but academics can apply these in collaborative research.
- Academics can achieve greater benefits and kudos from collaborative research.

\*  
**Networks are an important resource for specific projects as well as for progressing the overall agenda on university-Black and Minority Ethnic community collaborations.**  
\*

## 10. Appropriate resourcing for communities

- Community organisations are not 'Mother Theresa' who can do a lot on very little.
- Reliance on volunteers needs to be assessed for impact on them and the collaboration.
- Communities receive money for project costs, not salaries or core costs like universities.
- University payment systems are unhelpful to community collaborators.

## 11. University and community environments and structures

- Universities are better resourced and have relatively more security and stability.
- Communities do not always feel welcome, safe or understood in university environments and their role as 'immigration police' has implications for collaborative work.
- Systems and infrastructure differ between universities and community organisations including calendars, communities have to navigate large and complex environments.
- Important to recognise difference between individual goodwill and institutional investment.
- Business aspect of universities and 'marketisation of knowledge' can have impact on knowledge generation, how do communities fit in if they don't bring money to the table?

## 12. People involved in collaborative work

- More people than immediate partners involved introducing a range of dynamics and expectations – wider university, wider communities, people brought in to deliver specific aspects such as training or facilitation.
- Are university researchers able to work with any community groups and research topics? Matching academia with community interest is important.
- Individuals in universities can be antagonistic to each other and competitive, this can affect collaborations that have nothing to do with challenges relating to university–community collaborations.
- Networks are an important resource for specific projects as well as for progressing the overall agenda on university–Black and Minority Ethnic community collaborations.

### 13. Impact, evaluation, REF, TEF

- Present opportunities as well as challenges.
- How are community contributions in this respect recognised and how do they benefit?
- Universities could support developing capacity of community organisations to undertake their own evidence and outcomes work.
- Impact and REF – opportunities for communities to negotiate collaborative work and their contribution in this respect.
- TEF and widening participation – communities should be made aware about opportunities for community participation.

### 14. Engaging students in collaborative research

- Engaging university students in collaborative research can be mutually beneficial and can be done at no extra cost to community organisations.
- PhD students can engage in longer-term collaborative support.
- Careful management, scrutiny and support is needed – students can be expected to navigate complex terrains without support to acquire the relevant skills, knowledge and mentoring.
- Community organisations need to be alert to misuse or mismanagement of students and not collude with university/ academics exploitation of them.

### 15. Time, resources and emotional cost of collaboration

- Unrealistic expectations regarding these issues impact negatively on collaboration, which can be intense and emotionally demanding.
- There is a lack of focused reflection about collaborative work after projects end due to insufficient capacity and resources, this can result in valuable learning to be lost.
- University-community collaborations require extra work on top of an already challenging arena in terms of workload, racism and other inequalities. This is an avoidable risk.
- Universities have more staff and resources than community organisations and individual staff in community organisations can undertake multiple roles (e.g. service delivery, HR, research).

## 16. Space

- Space is important in relation to where collaborations take place and environments in which all participants feel at ease.
- Community organisations having a space in universities can be beneficial to collaborative work.
- There is an importance of encounter and spaces; community spaces are important to developing collaborations and engagement of community participants.
- Creating a common space and making time to let it evolve is important, not stick to rigid and inflexible approaches to delivery and an unhelpful focus on meeting targets.

## 17. Legacy

- Short-termism is not good for longer-term impact and legacy.
- What does collaborative work leave for collaborators? Universities, communities, community organisations.
- Many projects go from one contract to another and when competition is fierce, such as when there are funding cuts, these projects are at greater risk of going under.
- What is the legacy of Common Cause Research for local participants and for the project beyond the current funding period?

## 18. Aftercare

- Ongoing contact between universities and communities is important, not just in relation to and for the duration of a collaborative project.
- Communities must be kept informed about university outputs based on the collaboration and how these are being used, published, disseminated and so on.
- Do communities continue to benefit on an equal footing with universities after a project ends?
- How do you develop a project and make it more than the moment?

## 19. Role of policy makers and funders

- Information about collaborative projects should be presented to policy makers and funders to influence this arena and the data used to advocate for projects.

## Appendix 2: Project team and responsibilities

**T**he project was funded and coordinated as part of Professor Keri Facer's AHRC Leadership for the Connected Communities Programme based at the University of Bristol.

- The leadership team for the project comprised David Bryan (Xtend Consulting), Professor Keri Facer (University of Bristol), Professor Charles Forsdick (University of Liverpool), Dr Omar Khan (Runnymede Trust), Dr Karen Salt (University of Nottingham).
- Katherine Dunleavy (University of Bristol) was project coordinator and administrator.
- Phase 1 (survey and database development) was conducted by Drs Karen Salt and Kristy Warren from the Centre for Race and Rights at the University of Nottingham.
- Phase 2 (interviews and case studies) was conducted by Mhemooda Malek (University of Bristol) with support from Katherine Dunleavy (University of Bristol) and Professor Charles Forsdick (University of Liverpool).
- Professor Charles Forsdick and Hannah Payne (University of Liverpool) coordinated the Advisory Group and Liverpool workshop.
- Carol Sidney (Runnymede Trust) coordinated and supported the workshops.



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In describing how things are today, this report admirably helps readers to orientate themselves and their organisations to the changing relationships between the worlds of culture, community and academia. More importantly – and essential to serving as an excuse remover – it offers solutions and frameworks for how we might move forward together.

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