

Mile End Institute

Infrastructures for Impact: Community- University Partnerships in the UK and USA

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Background to the Report

This report is based on research into community-university partnerships (CUPs) in the UK and USA, funded by the Mile End Institute at Queen Mary University of London, and supported by Queen Mary's Centre for Public Engagement. The research consists of a review of the literature into CUPs as well as 16 original interviews with academics and staff associated with 15 different CUPs in the USA and UK (see table 1). The research also draws on lessons from the lead author's ESRC-funded PhD project, which involved the organisation of community-based research and civic leadership training in East London.

The report sets these CUPs in the context of their development alongside the changing landscape of higher education in both countries. It then provides an overview of the rationales driving the development of these CUPs, before identifying a number of differences amongst them. Funding models are then considered before the report moves on to explore the benefits of these CUPs to the all partners involved (students, academics, universities and communities). Finally the challenges of establishing and maintaining CUPs are considered. The report ends with a wider argument about the way in which CUPs can strengthen the impact of universities as well as the operation of democratic society, culture and practice.

Background to the Report (continued)

UK		
University of Bradford	Centre for Community Engagement-Community Associates	No longer in existence
University of Brighton	Community University Partnership Program (CUPP)	http://about.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/
Cardiff University	Community Gateway	http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/community-gateway
University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)	Centre for Volunteering and Community Leadership (CVCL)	http://www.uclan.ac.uk/about_us/professional_services/cvcl.php#
De Montfort University	Square Mile Programme	https://dmusquaremile.our.dmu.ac.uk/
Durham University	Centre for Social Justice and Community Action's Participatory Research Hub (PRH)	https://www.dur.ac.uk/socialjustice/prh/
University of Leeds	Co-Production Lab	Pilot Project as part of the N8 Research Partnership's Co-Production study
Leeds Beckett University	CommUNity	http://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/community/
Queen's University Belfast (QUB)	Science Shop	http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/Science-Shop/
USA		
University of California	Centre for Collaborative Research for an Equitable California (CCREC)	https://ccrec.ucsc.edu/
City University of New York (CUNY)	The Public Science Project (PSP)	http://publicscienceproject.org/
University of Cincinnati	Action Research Centre (ARC)	http://cech.uc.edu/centers/arc.html
Michigan State University	University Outreach and Engagement team (UOE)	https://engage.msu.edu/
University of Pennsylvania	The Netter Centre	https://www.nettercenter.upenn.edu/
University of Utah	University Neighbourhood Partners (UNP)	http://partners.utah.edu/home/

Table 1: The initiatives explored in this research report

Chapter One:

Community-University Partnerships in Context

Public Engagement and Impact in UK HEIs

UK universities are being pushed to consider the ‘impact’ that their research has on society. The impact agenda of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and growing scrutiny from citizens and government over their role in serving the public good, in the context of austerity and widespread cuts to public funding, are forcing universities to reflect on their practices and adapt them.

In responding to these pressures, HEIs have become more self-aware of their role in developing stocks of human capital to fuel economic development and driving innovation in different sectors through research, as well as acting as key engines of economic activity in local and regional economies through job creation, local investment and increased demand (Kelly et al, 2014). However, less progress has been made in addressing the impacts that the teaching, research and investment of HEIs can have on society more widely, beyond the economy, although investment in public engagement for social impact is growing very fast (Duncan et al, 2014).

The majority of social impact from UK universities has taken the form of outreach education, student placements in local organisations, and staff and student volunteering (Robinson et al, 2012), as well as growing attempts to use research and evidence in policy-making (HEFCE, 2010).

These forms of public engagement have tended to be top-down, with universities approaching the question of social impact as a means of meeting outside demands to widen participation and demonstrate impact for the REF (Pain, 2014). In its most instrumental forms, this kind of impact is top-down, drive-by, and superficial; it is unlikely to have much lasting or significant effect on the complex social issues that exist in the world.

However, there are a number of deeper, more normative rationales driving HEIs towards more meaningful forms of public engagement. These are centred on the perceived role that academic research can and should play in society and include the desire to make HEIs more accountable and legitimate to the public. There is also recognition that non-academics are often aware of social problems that academics do not see, and solving such problems makes it imperative to work on solutions together. There are also broader ideals about inclusive knowledge generation being key to democratic life, allowing those affected by issues and decisions to have an influence on them (Duncan et al, 2014).

In this sense, HEIs are uniquely placed to play a mediating role in democratic societies by acting as credible and prestigious spaces for knowledge generation around issues, providing supposedly politically-neutral sites for public matters to be addressed (Pearce and Pearson, 2007). This approach

Community-University Partnerships in Context (continued)

was raised in the Dearing report (1997, 72), which argued that as well as having impacts on the economy and the intellectual development of students, higher education could ‘play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilised, [and] inclusive society’. It has been further crystallised in the notion of the ‘civic university’ which Goddard (2009) defines as an institution that facilitates socially engaged research on issues at local, regional and national scales, based on a strong connection to people and place, with a commitment to generating wellbeing and prosperity. For Goddard, civic universities can contribute towards ‘systemic innovation’ as a means of finding solutions to society’s most pressing issues by working collaboratively with non-academics to generate new ideas and institutions for addressing them.

This collaborative way of working is beginning to take hold within UK HEIs. ‘Co-production’ is becoming increasingly popular as a means of knowledge production amongst academics. Campbell and Vanderhoven (2016: 12) define co-production as a mode of co-operative inquiry ‘between academic and non-academic communities, [which] assumes mutual respect, no hierarchy of knowledge forms, fluid and permeable disciplinary and professional boundaries and a normative concern for action, not simply a focus on systemic analysis’. Co-production is an alternative to traditional academic forms

of knowledge generation, and it involves academics giving up some control over their research in order to collaborate with others over knowledge creation for action and change.

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The benefits of co-production lie in its ability to relocate research activity to include people in the ‘real world’, making universities more accountable to the people whose taxes

fund their work, as well as making research more useful by aligning it to strategies for social change. Co-production represents a culture change for HEIs and it involves a lot of hard work to do it well. Effective and meaningful co-production requires investment in relationship-building, translation across cultures, organising and leadership. Additionally, given the complex nature of social issues, co-production requires a long-term approach to social change and it necessitates a sustained investment from all the partners involved (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016).

This approach to research and impact takes time and money, it requires a serious investment from HEIs to make it happen, and it is difficult to achieve (Campbell

Community-University Partnerships in Context (continued)

and Vanderhoven, 2016). Yet, attempts to institutionalise co-production have been made at various institutions, and this report focuses on the development of community-university partnerships (CUPs) as one method to do this.

Community-University Partnerships

Community-university partnerships are permanent, institutionalised partnerships between universities and their local communities that seek to facilitate teaching, research and volunteering opportunities for mutual benefit. They involve a long-term commitment to work with community organisations and citizens to collectively address pressing social issues, combining the expertise and resources of the university with the knowledge, resources and energy of local communities.

CUPs engage in sustained relational work to develop partnerships between academics, students and third sector organisations such as charities and community groups, as well as with selected public sector agencies and local businesses. CUPs play a facilitative role, acting as a broker of relationships between the university and the ‘community’, however the latter may be defined (Hart et al, 2009). Their activities tend to be based on the principle of reciprocity, involving the two-way flow of knowledge, information and benefits (Pearce and Pearson, 2007). In terms of the community side of CUPs, the

way this is defined varies from institution to institution and amongst different projects, with the community being defined variously by identity, place or issue (Mulvihill et al, 2011).

CUPs engage in three types of activity in their attempts to work collectively towards addressing social issues:

1. Community-Based Research: a collaborative enterprise between researchers (faculty and students) and community members, which validates multiple sources of knowledge, and has a goal of social action and change (Stoecker, 2003). Community-based research involves participation from non-academic partners in some or all stages of the research process from the identification of issues, the construction of research questions, data collection, analysis, representation, and action. The participation of non-academics in the knowledge-production process is intended to ensure that research is relevant to, and useful for, the needs of ordinary people, and that the representations deployed by academics reflect the experiences and desires of these people. As such, the researcher acts as a facilitator of knowledge-production instead of an extractor of information, giving participants more control over research, the production of knowledge and any impact it may generate.

Community-University Partnerships in Context (continued)

2. Knowledge Exchange: combines the academic and professional expertise of staff within the university with local knowledge held by the community to create innovative solutions to social issues. CUPs facilitate knowledge exchange by developing communities of practice around specific topics or issues, in which participants from a range of backgrounds, all whom have a stake in a topic, share their various forms of expertise to create new understandings and practices (Hart and Wolff, 2006). This works best when hierarchies of status are equalised, information flows in informal and sustained ways, and communication occurs through established relationships (Hart et al, 2011).

3. Student & Staff Volunteering: CUP activities, including community-based research and knowledge exchange tend to be primarily fuelled through the research and learning activities of academics and students, but volunteering also plays a part. Many CUPs work to support existing and develop new projects in the community by providing volunteers in order to expand the capacity of community organisations to deliver services and meet community need. This plays into the immediate needs of many third sector organisations to keep up and running. It also provides useful opportunities to staff and students to volunteer and learn new skills.

CUPS in America

Whilst on the rise in the UK, CUPs are long-established in the USA, growing out of the land-grant university tradition and the movement for service learning. Originally conceived in 1862 via government legislation as institutions to teach agriculture, military techniques and mechanic arts to working class people as part of a practical, liberal education, land-grant universities have become an integral feature of the American higher education sector. At the time of their inception, agricultural experimentation was central to the land-grant institutions' commitment to working for public benefit as well as individual development. There is now at least one land-grant university in every US state, and today they aim to 'fulfil their democratic mandate for openness, accessibility and service to people' (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, 2012: 2) by incorporating their three missions of research, teaching and service. Community-university partnerships have become well-established at these universities, and are notable for their size and scope.

The other tradition shaping American CUPs is the 'service learning' tradition. Service learning involves students working in partnership with local communities as part of the requirements of their structured education programmes. Based on a pedagogy of experiential learning rooted in the educational philosophy of John

Community-University Partnerships in Context (continued)

Dewey, service learning involves students undertaking work placements or supporting community projects and educational courses as a means of acquiring the knowledge and skills required of them from particular modules. Service learning is multi-disciplinary and can be incorporated into a wide range of academic disciplines and learning experiences (Annette, 2005). In meeting the dual goals of facilitating student educational attainment and meeting community need, service learning is a mutually beneficial model of partnership work.

At present, American HEIs continue to work in partnership with local communities on a large scale. As well as the longer established work of land-grant universities,

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civic mission of their institutions. These universities are consciously taking responsibility for the social problems that exist in the real world, working with non-academic partners to generate knowledge for an optimally democratic society (Gibson, 2005). Indeed, it is this

commitment to advancing democracy that underpins the vision and mission of the majority of CUPs in the USA, with universities casting themselves as ‘mediating institutions’ of democracy, facilitating the assembly of citizens around shared concerns with the aim of acting collectively to address them (Boyte, 2015).

In fulfilling this role, universities work in partnership with citizens and civil society organisations to engender a process of civic education amongst their students and people from the wider community. Drawing on traditions of action research, community organising, and experiential learning, such initiatives work to provide opportunities for collaborative ‘public work’ on pressing issues as part of a movement to cultivate active citizens, generate the knowledge needed to find solutions and provide a vehicle for citizens to exercise their collective influence over matters affecting their lives (Boyte, 2015).

In doing this work, American universities practice a form of ‘engaged scholarship’, which links the intellectual assets of HEIs, including expertise and student talents, to public issues through teaching and research that is conducted in collaboration with, rather than on, communities (Gibson, 2005). Following Boyer (1990; 1996) and Gibson (2005), engaged scholarship has 4 key elements:

Community-University Partnerships in Context (continued)

- **Discovery:** involving the search for new knowledge and the pursuit of inquiry;
- **Integration:** making connections across disciplines, and placing specialised knowledge in the wider context of communities;
- **Application:** always asking how knowledge can be applied to public problems and issues, and to address societal needs. Using social realities to test, inspire and challenge theory;
- **Teaching:** transmitting knowledge and transforming knowledge by sharing it beyond university walls.

As such, engaged scholarship represents an alternative form of work by universities, where research and teaching are driven by public problems, rather than theoretical problems, and academic work is more grounded in the lives of non-academic communities. Whilst on the rise in the USA, engaged scholarship also faces significant barriers to expansion as a mode of academic work. A focus on academic disciplines rather than public problems prevents pressing issues taking precedence in teaching and research; the emphasis on abstract theory over actionable ideas can result in the alienation of non-academic communities and their experiences and ideas from university work; and, the cultures of universities, which value traditional academic work over engaged work, all play a major part in preventing

engaged scholarship from flourishing (Gibson, 2005).

Despite this, the idea of engaged scholarship and the work of CUPs have proved influential in the US. These ideas and ways of working have been translated into the development of fledgling CUPs in the UK, with a number of universities taking inspiration and guidance from their American counterparts to develop institutionalised arrangements for facilitating partnership work with non-academic communities. The next section of this report explores these CUPs in more detail.

Chapter Two:

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships

This chapter provides an overview of the main rationales underlying the activities of CUPs in the UK and USA, before providing an explanation of different models of operations, which vary according to how partnerships are initiated, and the type of focus these partnerships have.

CUP Rationale: What drives CUPs?

Being Useful and Solving Problems

CUPs in the UK and USA have developed for a number of reasons. Whilst often reflecting agendas around PR and improving the image and reputation of the university within its surrounding

communities, those working as part of CUPs today are motivated by deeper concerns about accountability and

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responsibility to these communities, with many seeing their responsibility to be more useful to communities in helping to address social issues and develop solutions to long-standing social problems. As Mary Brydon-Miller from the University of Cincinnati's Action Research Centre stated:

“Part of making yourself useful is to bring all of the knowledge and all of the resources of the university that you can get your hands on to be able to solve the problem. So the old metaphor would

be some lawyer who goes off to pretend he's a campesino in Latin America. But, they don't need another campesino.

They need a lawyer, so go and be a good lawyer. So it's about helping people identify what kind of resources they need and then bringing those to bear. “

Universities have untapped resources and assets, which could be immediately useful for communities struggling to address their own problems. As such, CUPs can act as a vehicle for re-aligning these resources, and making these assets accessible for use by communities. Such assets include academic knowledge and expertise, the skills of faculty and students, and the time and 'manpower' of students.

However, universities can apply these assets to address communities' issues in different ways. One way of doing this is to utilise the skills and expertise held within the university to address issues for the community, as Mark Charlton, De Montfort University's Square Mile Program suggests:

“We do lots of things around teaching and learning in the community. Lots of health projects where we're applying our undergraduate health skills - free hearing tests, free blood pressure tests, where people can just come along. Every now and then we do a One Stop Health Shop where all our health students come together and you can get your hearing done, your blood pressure tested all under one roof.”

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

In this case, the CUP acts as a mechanism for the university to develop and offer services to the community, attempting to solve issues with its own resources. Providing IT skills and free hearing tests help to meet the immediate needs of local people and make improvements to their quality of life. However, other CUPs attempt to address social issues by increasing the capacity of people to solve their own problems, even if they do so in partnership with academic staff from a CUP. As Sarah Munro, the director of Utah University's University Neighbourhood Partners explained:

“We focus more on political voice and civic engagement, the idea that historically in marginalised communities there has been an absence of representation and voice that address those communities, so that the university needed to play a role in not addressing those concerns themselves, but in building the skills and opportunities of resident leaders to have that political voice.”

Rather than redirecting resources to address problems for the community partner, this CUP attempts to develop the capacity of its community partners to address their own problems through the development of local leadership and political voice. In a very different emphasis this CUP aims to work with the community partners in order to strengthen civic skills and democratic engagement.

Creating an Infrastructure for Engagement

The second major rationale driving CUPs is a desire to create an infrastructure to allow universities to engage with communities in ways that can have an impact, be effective, and be mutually beneficial.

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“You can't just leave it down to individual projects, you have to have infrastructure. Just as the university has infrastructure for working with business and various other sorts of infrastructure, you have to have this for working with the third sector. You can't just do it as a kind of piecemeal thing” (Rachel Pain, Durham University's Participatory Research Hub)

“From my own experience in architecture, I put a lot of effort into working with community groups and then you just wouldn't have resources to do anything longer term. So, ideas would be generated, relationships would be formed and then you wouldn't be able to go beyond that. So we said, we think that you should make a commitment for a long term relationship with a particular community and just have a focused idea of working in meaningful partnership from

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

the bottom up.” (Mhairi McVicar, Cardiff University’s Community Gateway)

While high quality engaged scholarship is already occurring at many universities, this work is often disjointed, ad-hoc and dependent on the efforts and commitment of individual academics. This tends to result in projects starting and finishing without significant advances being made to solve problems. It also means that relationships tend to dissipate over time, which can lead to a sense of ‘research fatigue’ whereby community partners feel unable to continue supporting this kind of work.

As such, CUPs represent an attempt to create the infrastructure that can sustain joint-working for the long term. Realising that the traditional ‘smash and grab’ approach to research with communities is ineffective and that the current systems to support public engagement on a piecemeal basis do not go far enough, proponents of CUPs see them as the next step in transforming the culture of HEIs to promote truly engaged scholarship.

What this looks like in practice is moving from a situation where academics apply for funding for a project in which they want to engage with specific communities, and then seeking to recruit partners once the funding has been awarded, towards a situation where community partners are in a position to work with researchers to identify their own interests and issues,

develop research projects designed to address them, and then apply for funding together. In the words of an academic who has worked as part of two CUPs in America, ‘the idea of these organisations is to be responsive to the community needs and to find ways to bring the community into the organisation’.

What do CUPs do?

CUPs have two main functions. The first of these is brokering relationships between people and organisations in the ‘community’ (however defined) and people within the university, including students, faculty and staff. As Karl Witty, the manager of Leeds Beckett’s CommUNity described it:

“A lot of our work is about brokerage, so when the opportunities come up we ensure that the right team is formed in the university and connected to the right organisations.”

The second role is to facilitate activity. Once partnerships have been initiated, CUPs work to support their development and maintenance by ensuring effective communication and developing mutual understanding, as well as helping to design and find funding for projects. Sarah Munro, the director of the University of Utah’s UNP explained this role:

“We have one staff member for each of our three priority areas, and their position is called ‘partnership manager’. Their role is to be a convener. They are the

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

ones who maintain the communication between the partners, they're the ones who try to figure out what kind of funding needs there are, and the UNP plays a role in trying to raise funds for those partnerships. But my staff does not do the actual work. My staff brings the partners together from the university and the community who do the work, so that allows us to have a lot more going on than any individual person would be able to do by themselves."

Different Models of CUP

Brokerage and facilitation can be done in different ways and CUPs can be classified according to two different aspects of engagement. These are the mode of initiation, and the focus of engagement. The former refers to the ways in which universities initiate partnerships with communities, and the latter refers to the primary focus of these partnerships. CUPs tend to differentiate from each other along these two facets, with variations in the mode of initiation falling under 'front door'; 'networked'; and, 'embedded' approaches. The focus of engagement tends to be either place-based or issue-based, as explicated further below.

Mode of Initiation: Front Door, Network, and Embedded

Front Door CUPs

There are a number of CUPs where the primary mode of initiating partnerships with communities is via a 'front door' that has

been created for the community to make connection and inquiries of the university. The CUP operates as a 'front desk' point of contact to communities and because of this, partnerships tend to be initiated with existing charities and CVS organisations, as well as state bodies and some active individuals. Rather than bringing the university to the community, the 'front door' approach rests on the assumption that the community will come to the university.

For example, Brighton's CUPP has a helpdesk and local people and organisations are encouraged to approach the university via the helpdesk with inquiries and ideas for projects. The helpdesk manager then works to connect these people to staff within the university by setting up a meeting to initiate a collaboration. As a research respondent explained:

"The help desk was part of the original model. If we want to work with communities if they've got an idea, or if people want to access the university in some way, how do they go about that? So the helpdesk assumes that certain point of access for people to come and have a conversation at the staffing point."

Once contact is made it is then up to the member of staff and the community member to decide on the next steps. Seed funding is provided by the CUPP to get partnerships off the ground and to help pilot projects and facilitate conversations.

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

In order to generate awareness of the CUPP and its potential benefits to communities, part of the helpdesk manager's role is to promote it within the local area.

Similarly, the Science Shop at Queen's University Belfast acts as a point of entry for community groups to access the resources of the university, with Science Shop staff acting as brokers of relationships between both sides. Science shops sit within universities acting as the interface between civil society and academia (European Commission, 2003). Community organisations and charities approach the science shop with a piece of research that they would like conducted to support their work in a particular area. At Queen's University, the science shop staff then take these opportunities to both undergraduate and taught postgraduate students doing their dissertations to match student interests to community need.

Both of these examples illustrate how CUPs that take a 'front door' approach play a responsive role in relation to community need. They wait for communities to raise and bring their issues to the university and respond accordingly.

Embedded CUPs

In a number of other CUPs the primary mode of initiation is to embed university staff in communities in order to find issues, mobilise people and develop projects. Embedded CUPs tend to play an organising

role within communities, working to intentionally build new relationships between the university and the community by being present 'out there', rather than waiting for the community to come to them. As such they tend to go beyond just working with established charities and CVS organisations, reaching out to a wider range of civil society organisations, and unorganised individuals.

The University of Michigan's University Outreach and Engagement (UOE) team is an example of this. A member of staff has been employed to develop a partnership between residents and civil society organisations in the city of Flint. Bob Brown, explained his role as follows:

"I build relationships here in Flint with institutions, with grass root organisations, and with residents. And through those relationships and that work that I do, we build a community with people here that I'm able then to engage the university into. So it's all relationship based and it revolves around trying to have the resident voice be a full voice in the effort... To do this, you've got to go after that deep engagement and you've got to be out in the neighbourhoods and you've got to go to them, not bring them to you."

Flint is a city that has been subjected to decades of disinvestment, resulting in high levels of poverty and unemployment. There is limited access to healthy food amongst residents, and the city is dealing

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

with a major public health crisis caused by lead poisoning of the water system. Within this context, the UOE team work to build new forms of citizen engagement so that Flint residents can start to address some of these problems collectively. This works through the creation of teams of residents around priority issues, such as violence, racism, and rebuilding civic life, and the development of training programs to cultivate these residents' civic skills and capacities to effect change (Boyle, 2015). UOE then works to link these resident-led efforts to the resources of the university to help support them where they can. For example, the computer science department is working with citizens to develop an app that maps the nearest places to buy fresh food in Flint each day, to try and combat poor health.

As such, unlike the front door approach, the embedded approach does not wait for ideas to come from the community, but rather, involves the university playing an active role in facilitating ideas and action in collaboration with communities.

Networked CUPs

Networked CUPs tend to work with third sector and civil society organisations that are already in relationship with academics. The role of these CUPs is to nurture and develop these pre-existing relationships and their projects by re-directing university resources towards them. Over time, these CUPs grow by developing new

partnerships through the existing network and project work. In contrast to the 'front door' and embedded approaches, the networked approach is less concerned with establishing new partnerships than deepening existing ones. This is often due to limited financial capacity to expand, rather than conscious choice.

For example, the Leeds Beckett CommUNITY CUP developed out of pre-existing relationships held by staff with community organisations and the CUP has allowed these relationships to become more formalised, giving partners access to more of the resources that the university has to offer, and allowing the organisations to engage in more long-term, ongoing and strategic work, which goes beyond individual relationships and projects. As Karl Witty put it:

“CommUNITY is built around a pre-existing partnership between an academic and an organisation called Hamara, an organisation based in the city working primarily with South Asian communities. Around this, we developed several other, what we call, 'strategic partnerships'. We've got five in total now, soon to be 6 or 7, with organisations who we as an institution already have strong relationships with, through various members of staff.”

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

Modes of Initiation and Why They Matter

Each of these modes of initiation has its benefits and drawbacks. Notwithstanding the differing levels of resource needed in each one (and funding models for CUPs will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3), the three approaches can be assessed in relation to the main rationales behind CUPs discussed earlier. If the purpose of CUPs is to free up the resources, skills and knowledge held within the university and combine these with the skills, knowledge, resources and energy of community partners, for mutual benefit, then these modes of initiation have different implications for what can be done.

In terms of making universities more open to communities, the 'front door' approach offers access to anyone who has an idea or inquiry. As long as people outside the university are aware of the CUP and understand how to approach it, they can access its resources without barriers. As Bethan Prosser, the manager of Brighton CUPP explained:

"We follow up everything, so everyone will get a response of some sort, and I tend to try not to do too much gate keeping. I've been doing this role for almost four years now and I think sometimes you get to a point where you realise what might work and what might not at that first initial meeting. But there are always surprises. Quite often if I've had something through

and there hasn't been anyone who could assist in that area, I've gone through it again say six months later, and things have changed and there is now someone interested. So I tend to work in a very open, flexible way and always ask questions."

However, a degree of self-selection with front door CUPs does occur. Primarily, this is because those who approach CUPs tend to be groups and organisations who have a clear sense of how they can benefit from partnering with the university. As such, front door CUPs tend to work primarily with pre-existing charities and civil society organisations, facilitating projects that fit within their agendas. Those people in communities who are not part of these groups, or part of any group at all are not in a position to approach a CUP. Indeed, a front door approach assumes that communities are already organised around issues and interests and thus able to utilise the university's resources to help solve their problems. However, when civil society organisation is weak, front door models are weak at helping to address community issues (Fischer et al 2004).

Recognising this, embedded CUPs take the opposite approach to communities, by intentionally working to build civil society capacity alongside and through its partnership work. Wills (2016) argues that a community's capacity to come together to address social issues rests upon the combination of human capital,

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

organisational resources and social relationships within that community, and when those resources are weak, it is difficult to proceed. As such, the front door approach can only work with the organised parts of a community, leaving unorganised people's issues and voices unrepresented in its work. This is problematic as it means the resources of the university may become directed for the benefit of certain parts of the community, rather than the community as a whole.

As such, embedded CUPs seek to play an organising role in communities, working to build up the capacity of people to utilise university resources effectively. This involves a process of relationship building between individuals and groups to facilitate communication around shared issues and the development of strategies for action (Harney et al, 2016). In doing this, embedded CUPs are potentially more open to the plurality of voices and issues that exist in communities because they invest time in bringing in those who may see their voice as inappropriate for university settings (and in Chapter 5 we return to this issue in a discussion about pluralism and CUPs).

Finally, networked CUPs sit somewhere in between front door and embedded CUPs, being founded upon strong relationships with certain community groups, but not seeking to actively go beyond the current network. Networked CUPs may also struggle to reach beyond those already involved with universities

(see Chatterton, 2016 for drawbacks of a networked approach to CUPs), and as such, they have a more closed nature, and are less intentional in developing the voice of unorganised individuals. Although the reasons for this are often due to a pragmatic response to a lack of capacity, the focus on a limited number of relationships will limit the impact of a CUP of this kind.

The Focus of Engagement

As well as varying in the mode of initiation between the university and community, CUPs also vary in regard to their focus of work. In this section we contrast those that have taken an explicitly place-based approach with those that are focused on issues.

Place-Based CUPs

Some CUPs are partnerships that are focused on a specific geographical area, ranging in scale from the city down to particular neighbourhoods. These CUPs tend to develop partnerships between people in the university and individuals and community organisations in a particular place, with the goal of providing public benefits for all of the residents of that place.

An example of a CUP with a place-based focus of engagement is Cardiff University's Community Gateway, which is centred around the neighbourhood of Grangetown. The university is making a long-term commitment to one particular

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

neighbourhood in order to work with residents and community groups to improve the area by linking its research, teaching and volunteering opportunities to local agendas for change. As outlined on their website:

“Community Gateway is committed to building a long-term partnership with residents of Grangetown to make the area an even better place to live. We will do this by developing world class research, teaching and volunteering opportunities which respond to local needs.”

Community Gateway seeks to bring local people together to develop projects that benefit the whole place and its staff are committed to concentrating their efforts on a contained geographical area. The reasons for taking this approach centre on the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships between the university and community partners, for the long term.

Issue-Based CUPs

Where the focus of CUPs does not centre around commitments to a particular place, they tend to focus on commitments to a specific set of issues, topics or set of values. In issue-based CUPs, partnerships form between people at the university and groups in the community who share the same goals.

An example of an issue-based CUP is the People’s Science Project (PSP), housed at City University of New York (CUNY).

A research respondent from CUNY’s Public Science Project explained that their engagement with communities is guided by commitment to a set of values and ideals around social justice. As they put it:

“We have very particular social justice commitments, so it’s not geographically specific. Public Science Project is much more committed around doing participatory work with a social justice orientation, and so our work has really grown out of relationships with community based organisations [who share our commitment].”

These differences in focus highlight the twin issues of trust and the scale of the impact that can be achieved. In these respects there are good reasons for focusing on place as a starting point for this kind of work and we explore this further below.

Building Trust

All CUPs are underpinned by strong relationships of reciprocity between people within universities and communities. These relationships take a long time to develop, and require constant nurturing to maintain levels of trust. Trust is important for CUPs because universities have long been perceived as somehow ‘outside’ their surrounding communities, operating in their own interests rather than in the interests of the community. As a result, people in universities and communities are often perceived to be living in different

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

worlds, and thus trust between the two is vital to building a mutual understanding and an equal flow of communication.

Reflecting on the experiences of those involved in place-based CUPs highlights the importance of place in providing an opportunity to build strong relationships of trust. Indeed, as Mark Charlton from De Montfort University argued, place can act as a container of effort to focus the work that is needed to build and maintain relationships between the university and the community:

“During the first year I was doing this it felt like going to work and getting punched in the face, going back to work and doing it all over again. But then by year 2 or 3 you are so warmly received because people trust you and people understand you. When we went into this community and started to say we’re going to do lots of this stuff, some of which was quite cool and quite noble; trying to help people get into jobs etc., lots of people just thought that here’s a multi-million pound organisation wading into our community with all these projects, and they’re going to want us to pay for it, they’re going to take money from us, somehow, and they’re going to over-run the area with their own agenda.”

Overcoming this hostility and suspicion involved investing the time and energy to build trust. For De Montfort University, the local, place-based nature of their activities

accelerated this process:

“It was actually going out and becoming familiar faces in the community that enabled us to get champions and enabled a flow of communication. If you try to ring a university as a member of the public to try to get hold of anyone, it’s a nightmare. But if they can stop you in the street and say ‘Hey, I went to that thing and didn’t like it, or you should be doing this for our kids’, then you can go back to it and show you have made attempts to respond to the community. It was a very grassroots attempt” (Mark Charlton, De Montfort University’s Square Mile Program)

Developing trust with community partners is made easier by concentrating efforts in a particular place, as this allows the university to be physically and visibly present in the community. As such, place can act as a container of relationships and the stage for regular face to face interaction. This helped to win over key opinion formers in the community in Leicester, and it helped develop a positive reputation for the university. As Mark Charlton explained:

“There was one woman in the community at the start, who would spend all day telling me how shit it was. But eventually, when she came round she would be saying how good it was that the university is trying to make a difference. She was a real opinion former in the community and

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

in the end we got about 4 or 5 different people like that who started to be on our side and that was the green shoots of it, but that was a really tricky time, winning trust in the community.”

There is a growing literature about the importance of social networks in shaping community activity and opinion (Sampson, 2012; Rawson et al, 2010). These networks are influential in shaping the behaviour of members by spreading values and knowledge. Whilst social networks are not delimited by geographical place, local social ties are still very important for many people, and having a place-based focus for CUPs allows these networks to facilitate local engagement. By identifying local ‘nodes’ in these networks, finding the people who can make things happen in a community and mobilise others, place-based CUPs have become a success.

In contrast, issue-based CUPs will involve a similar commitment to building good relationships with community partners, but the lack of geographical focus makes it more difficult to build on this work in order to develop new relationships and collaborations. From an investment perspective, it is perhaps wiser for universities to invest in building relationships and trust within specific places, rather than with more disjointed partners, as trust acts as a resource to support future work, without the need to build new relationships from scratch.

Having an Impact

Another reason for CUPs focusing their work in one particular place is the belief that place-based approaches can help to generate tangible impacts that meaningfully address complex social issues, and demonstrate the worth of the CUP. Sarah Munro from the University of Utah’s UNP said:

“By thinking about it as a broad neighbourhood vision, we can bring in people from all different fields across the university...With issue-based partnerships, I don’t see that they have the same ability to engage community members on a deep level because one of the things that is effective with a place based effort is that you can look at the integration of different social issues as they impact a single individual or a single family, and that’s the kind of complex interplay and interdisciplinary work that I think is very powerful at an academic level. You’re looking at health and education and socioeconomic status and race and all of those things, how they cross connect in people to shape their experiences and their opportunities. And you really can’t do that if you’re just focussing on one issue

A place-based approach to problem-solving is perhaps more likely to have the sort of impact that universities and communities are looking for due to its ability to approach social problems in a more holistic and multi-faceted way than is possible via

Motivations and Models for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

issue-based work. In this respect, place-based CUPs are about improving all aspects of a particular area, employing various means to make this happen, whatever the issues.

CUP Models

Table 1 shows each of the CUPs researched for this report categorised according our identification of their mode of partnership initiation and the focus of their partnership work. It is worth noting that these models are developed from an analysis of the 16 CUPs researched for this report, and this is not a fully comprehensive analysis of all the CUPs that operate across the two countries. In reality, all CUPs exhibit elements of each approach in some ways and at some point, being the product of ingenuity and experimentation by the people making them happen.

The CUPs are characterised in regard to differences in the mode of initiation and the nature of the focus of the work. Embedded, place-based CUPs are common in both the UK and USA, owing to the way that limiting activity to particular local places and seeking to build new relationships with people in communities are mutually supportive. As is clear in the Table, issue-based CUPs tend to favour a networked or front door approach, as these generally work with established partners, on established sets of issues rather than seeking to work with harder to reach groups on more hidden issues.

However, it is important to note that the way different CUPs operate is determined largely by their access to funding, with a networked approach being taken where funding and capacity is limited, and embedded or front door approaches being developed where CUPs are better resourced.

Mode of Initiation	Focus of Engagement	
	Place-Based	Issue-Based
Front Door	Brighton CUPP	Durham PRH QUB Science Shop UCLAN CVCL
Networked	University of Leeds Co-Production Lab	Leeds Beckett CommUNlty CUNY PSP Cincinnati ARC California CCREC
Embedded	Bradford Community Associates Cardiff Community Gateway De Montfort Square Mile MSU UOE Pennsylvania Netter Centre;	

Table 2: The CUPs categorised in regard to their mode of initiation and focus of engagement

Chapter Three:

Funding Sources for Community-University Partnerships

CUPs need finance for their **core running costs**, which include staff time for relationship-building and project management, administration, promotion, marketing and training. They must also secure funding to support **individual projects** and there are a number of ways that existing CUPs fund these activities.

Core costs tend to be funded by a mixture of university-funding, outside sources and revenues attached to activity. In relation to university-funding, we found that CUPs were often established as part of core (i.e. non-grant) university staffing commitments made by an institution and this gave them a greater level of security than those where all the core costs depended upon time-limited grants and/or outside funding.

In the UK, universities have been able to use government grants as part of the funding for CUPs. This includes money attached to the widening participation and/or public engagement agendas that comes from Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Higher Education Innovation Fund or Impact Acceleration Account money that comes from the ESRC. This provides less long-term security than CUPs funded through general funds but it has been a means to bolster the work of the CUPs.

Grants from philanthropic trusts and donors have also been used to fund the core costs of CUPs in some locations and while these grants typically last between

2-5 years, they can help CUPs to demonstrate their worth to a university, which then makes it easier to secure general funding in the longer-term.

Once underway, core expenditure can be met, at least in part, by including expenses in the Pathways to Impact sections of grant proposals submitted to RCUK. This involves the piecing together of pots of money to fund the core staffing costs of CUPs, and it raises the danger that CUPs can become more driven by the interests of grant-makers than the interests articulated by the community. For CUPs to be successful, investment is needed in the work of maintaining long-term relationships, outside of specific projects (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016) and when core costs are sourced from grants, this makes this work more difficult to sustain in a meaningful way.

In this regard, particular research projects can be supported by grants from research councils, state agencies (especially in relation to education and health), and other grant-making trusts, paid directly to universities. This is the main source of funding for CUP projects, and most CUPs are pragmatic when applying for grant-funding for projects, writing bids to meet the criteria of funders, and then using the money creatively to support the interests of the community when awarded. In addition, funding for projects can also come from grants made directly to community partners, with costs written in to support the

Funding Sources for Community-University Partnerships (continued)

universities involvement in the project. This gives community partners more control and ownership over CUP work.

Some CUPs offer seed funding for projects, which are supported as part of their costs sourced from the university or philanthropic trusts. These are used to kick-start partnerships and pilot small projects, by providing the money to hire rooms, provide refreshments etc. In some cases, the CUP offers to match fund projects that have raised money from elsewhere.

It is interesting that some CUPs also offer elective modules to students at the university and they receive additional funding for these, which then supports staff to run the CUP and in some cases, to fund the additional teaching required. This gives CUPs a core offer to the university, which raises money to support the other work involved in making CUPs happen.

Most of the UK-based CUPs covered in this research reported a general struggle with funding, and a sense that there is still some way to go before university managers recognise them as an essential part of the university's organisational structure. Indeed, many CUPs are uncertain about their future, and some respondents reported on the recent closure of their CUP, due to a lack of funding (e.g. at Bradford University). However, in the USA, CUPs are much better supported by the university's centre, with core costs being guaranteed as part of the general funds of the university. In the

UK it seems that if funding can be secured, even for a short period, it is then the job of the CUP to prove their worth to the university and convince them to invest for the much longer term.

Chapter Four:

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships

CUPs are intended to generate mutual benefits for all those involved in the partnership and there are argued to be positive impacts for academics, students, communities as well as universities. This section of the report gives an overview of the different benefits that CUPs can bring to the partners.

For Academics

Academic Innovation

Collaborative work and engaged scholarship can lead to academic innovation through the creation and testing of new ideas. Engaged work involves applying academic ideas and concepts to real-world situations in an attempt to address problems, and this provides an opportunity to challenge these ideas and develop new ones. Also, opening

Opening up academic inquiry to equal participation from community partners can lead to new ideas, issues and perspectives shaping research and teaching agendas.

up academic inquiry to equal participation from community partners can lead to new ideas, issues and perspectives shaping research and teaching agendas, and in

turn, this can help to open up new avenues of inquiry that may have previously been ignored or neglected. CUPs thus help to make the work of academics more relevant and useful in addressing societal issues, with community partners playing a key role

in challenging academic orthodoxy:

“There’s always going to be some projects that, either don’t get funding or don’t come up with anything that would be considered academically innovative. But there’s plenty of collaborative projects which do, and I think my argument would be that in some ways they’re more likely to come up with something that’s more interesting and different, and allows you to speak back to that body of academic theory simply because there’s so many different partners involved and the issues are really relevant. So that is another way to sell it to the university, that this makes for better innovative research that actually makes an impact as well.” (Rachel Pain, Durham University’s Participatory Research Hub)

Likewise, Bob Brown from Michigan State University’s University Outreach & Engagement (UOE) argued that the CUP helped them to innovate beyond the process of knowledge creation to consider its wider application:

“We generate new opportunities for additional advancements to knowledge [but] we’re not just generating knowledge; it’s more than that. It’s the generation of knowledge, the application of knowledge, the evaluation of what happens. So from a university perspective, it helps with the overall research mission of the university.”

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships (continued)

Access to Collaborators

Many academics are keen to conduct their work in more engaged ways by working with communities. For some, this stems from a personal commitment to do work that is more meaningful and relevant to the wider world. For others, it is being encouraged by wider institutional agendas around public engagement and impact. Either way, however, it is difficult for academics to know where to begin in reaching out to communities. Traditional academic training does not provide opportunities to develop the skills needed to engage with communities, and the pressures of research and teaching leave academics who may possess those skills with scarce time to invest in building and maintaining relationships outside of the university.

CUPs can support these academics in developing partnerships with communities. They act as a point of contact to help broker relationships and make collaborations happen. In some ways, CUPs provide a service to academics looking to engage and have an impact by doing the relational work for them, making it easier for the academic to build upon the foundational work already done. This is particularly important in universities where public engagement and impact are increasingly being valued as criteria to aid career progression and demonstrate worth.

Moreover, by working with communities in a collaborative way, academics can build

their own relationships with organisations and people, and build their reputation and trust in communities. This gives them potential access to participants for future research projects, thus increasing their access to useful data for their own academic agenda:

“I’d say about ten per cent of our enquiries come from inside the university, and sometimes that’s people just coming through to ask for a bit of support or help on how to go about something. Sometimes it’s a specific request of, ‘we’ve got this research funding bid we’re putting together, we need some organisations that are working with children and young people that would be up for partnering on this, who do you think?’ We’ve very much become a point of information resource to the rest of the university.” (Bethan Prosser, Brighton’s CUPP)

“In the last ten years or so, two of our major funders, the National Institute of Health and the National Science Foundation, are looking at things like ‘impact’, ‘engaging the community’, and ‘publics’, and you have to demonstrate community engagement or community participation. But some of our academics were clueless about doing that and our director and others really helped to shape some of their proposals. Because the science piece was all there but the community engagement piece, and how they did that, wasn’t.” (Anonymous Academic, American CUP)

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships (continued)

Job Satisfaction

Most academics go into academia to pursue a personal passion. They spend long, often lonely, hours devoting their energies to specific problems and issues that drive them. Yet, trends in higher education have resulted in a number of pressures on their work, which can take away from the passions that motivate them. Large class sizes and the marketization of higher education, as well as competitive impulses to ‘publish or perish’ can detract from the research and teaching experience, leading to times where it can feel like things are done to go through the motions, rather than for a meaningful reason.

For one anonymous respondent in the USA, quoted below, engagement in the CUP helped to counter this feeling while also improving the quality of student experience and learning for those involved:

“What we heard earliest on with faculty, was that even though these [service learning] classes can be a bit more work for them, as they really engaged their students in the community, a kind of critical thinking was coming back, a level of engagement from their students. And the kinds of questions and reflections they got in papers was so much deeper and more lively, as they were taking what they were learning and testing it out and beginning to work with other people, beginning to see that problems don’t solve themselves overnight, in a textbook: “do X, Y and Z, and all of a sudden X,

you know, the outcome happens”. But there’s a lot of steps and a lot of working together that has to come first. And that whole kind of deepening of student learning, I think for many faculty kind of enlivened their sense of why they were teaching and doing that, it really was a good jump start”

By linking research and teaching to real-world contexts and engaging academics in collaborations with external organisations and people, CUPs can bring academic work alive, helping to provide a deeper sense of job satisfaction for academics.

For Students

Enhanced Learning Experience

CUPs can bring academic work alive, helping to provide a deeper sense of job satisfaction for academics.

For students, participating in CUP projects as part of their course can provide a more meaningful and enriching learning experience. CUP projects enhance the acquisition of academic knowledge in a particular discipline by providing opportunities for this knowledge to be applied in live settings. This allows students to see the relevance and utility of their studies, connecting them to something wider than lectures and textbooks. As Bob Brown from Michigan State University’s University Outreach & Engagement reported:

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships (continued)

“From a student perspective, being engaged in the community widens their understanding of the world and the society that they’re living in. It gives them greater experience, especially if they have to go out and engage with groups that they don’t feel comfortable doing that with. It helps them grow into more mature, more skilled, more grounded people coming out of university. “

Similarly, Mhairi McVicar from Cardiff University’s Community Gateway found a positive response from their students:

“And I think that’s something that students have said they really appreciate, that they sort of understand that their piece of work is a small piece of work in a bigger picture, and that something is going to come of that work.”

Through this engaged learning, students develop a number of skills and attributes, which are not secured through desk-based learning. These include team work, working across difference, and working towards collective goals and agendas. All of these challenge students more deeply and provide exciting and novel learning experiences. This is particularly important for universities as students begin to scrutinise the teaching on offer more in response to increasing tuition fees.

Skills Development and Employability

Related to the above point is the fact that these enriched learning experiences can provide opportunities to increase

student employability through their degree courses. As well as making learning more meaningful, courses linked to CUP projects also allow students to develop a number of core skills that are desired by employers. This helps challenge the view held by employers that university graduates lack the transferable skills needed to get by in the world of work, and that academic qualifications are increasingly irrelevant in relation to the demands of the economy. As one interviewee explained:

“Often I think the biggest realisation for many students is that what they need to do is really work with the team, work together with broad points of view. And even just simple things like, you know, if you’re expected to be there at 2pm you’d better be there at 2pm because people are working with you and you know, you have to sign a time sheet, you have to do this and that. They’re things that some of them had not done yet in their working lives, but are important. So we are really challenging them with our different internships that try and provide more leadership opportunities within our programmes for them.” (Anonymous Academic, American CUP)

CUPs can help to catalyse a win-win situation in which students can develop the skills demanded of them by economic circumstances, whilst still maintaining the importance of academic learning and the disciplines by developing courses and learning experiences that put the

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships (continued)

acquisition of academic knowledge into practical use. This plays into students' long-term interests to get a job following their training at university, as Emma McKenna from Queen's University Belfast's Science Shop illustrated:

“The thing that I would always say, is that the experience that students have in doing research with communities can be a nice story in an interview. You know, it can be a very nice, accessible story if you've done your degree in a subject area that can seem a bit nebulous for employers, like geography or sociology. If you say, ‘Well actually I did a piece of research for Cancer Focus Northern Ireland and this is what I did and this was the outcome’, it seems more like something people can understand. And they can see it is very much tied to what you did in your degree. It should be a way of you demonstrating some of the values of what you learned in your degree”

For Communities

Access to Knowledge

One of the main assets that universities have to offer communities in aiding their problem-solving efforts, is access to knowledge. Universities house people who possess various forms of academic expertise, which may be of immediate use to communities in addressing issues. This expertise can be applied to problematic situations to develop new solutions.

However, it is never a case of universities possessing the ‘golden bullet’ which can solve all of the community's problems, but rather, it is the combination of academic expertise from the university, with the local

It is the combination of academic expertise from the university, with the local expertise of communities, that can lead to innovations in problem-solving with the increased capacity to act.

expertise of communities, that can lead to innovations in problem-solving with the increased capacity to act. As Bob Brown, from Michigan State's UOE highlighted:

“For the community, the merging of science and local wisdom creates solutions that people participate in, that are not done to them but done with them, and that's the best hope in my mind for transformation to occur and for all people to realise a better future.”

An example of the productive potential of this ‘knowledge exchange’ is provided by a project facilitated by the Brighton University's CUPP (Hart and Wolff, 2006). The project: ‘Resilient Therapy: A Box of Ordinary Magic Tricks’, brought together parents, young people, health practitioners, academics and a graphic designer to share their various forms of expertise in order to promote resilient therapy as a therapeutic method for families to use to foster resilience in young people with

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships (continued)

mental health issues. This project came out of a frustration amongst academics that the benefits of resilient therapy to young people, evidenced by hundreds of academic studies, were not translating into increased uptake in the method by health practitioners and families. The project aimed to spread the lessons from academia in an accessible way through art, to create a 'magic box' to educate families on how to use the method through drama, workshops and mentoring. The input of families and young people in the project, ensured that the end product made sense and appealed to non-academic users, allowing the knowledge held by the university to spread outwards and be applied in the community.

CUPs provide valuable opportunities for communities to voice their own knowledge, in ways that are deemed more credible and valid by decision-makers.

Moreover, through community-based research, CUPs provide valuable opportunities for communities to voice their own knowledge,

in ways that are deemed more credible and valid by decision-makers, allowing communities to have their voice heard where previously they have been ignored. Reporting on a piece of community-based action research conducted between Queen Mary University of London and residents in the borough of Tower Hamlets, Harney et al (2016) similarly argued that university-

based research can play a facilitative role in giving voice to community sentiments in ways that increase the community's ability to be heard and their capacity to act for change.

A resident-led survey, and a report of local people's experiences of living in overcrowded housing, and paying high rents helped to validate the lived knowledge of the community through its association with the authority of the university. This allowed residents to lobby local politicians for change, and voice their concerns to the wider public, with their report being picked up on by the national press in the Guardian newspaper, and local media outlets. As such, as well as providing access to expertise, CUPs also provide communities with the opportunity to generate and publicise their own knowledge as part of efforts to effect social change.

Access to People Power

Another asset that universities can offer to communities through CUPs is access to its people, especially students. Community organisations exist in situations of extreme pressure. Reliant on grant-funding, many organisations face a constant battle of writing and submitting bids just to stay afloat, and scarce resources in a time of public spending cuts leave many organisations under-staffed and in need of volunteers.

If universities want to seriously partner with community groups, then perhaps one of the most useful things they can offer is

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships (continued)

access to students to support the projects that are already ongoing in the community. As discussed above, this provides students with valuable opportunities to develop skills and aid their career progression, and it also meets the immediate staffing needs of community organisations. Many CUPs offer community organisations access to student placements to support their organisation, often where this connects to the student's degree course. However, care must be taken to avoid areas being over-run with student activity, which may be difficult to manage and sustain (Mulvihill et al 2011). Two respondents highlighted the scale of that these student resources can reach:

“So what we've ended up with is in the last year about 2,500 students going out and about around the community doing volunteer work.” (Jenny Lamb, UCLAN CVCL)

“Through our ABCS classes [service learning], we have about 1,600 to 1,700 students in an academic year working in the community.” (Anonymous Academic, American CUP)

On top of this, students possess relatively high levels of free time and are developing a range of specialist skills during their time at university. Utilised wisely, and when coupled with specific resources as appropriate, student volunteering can thus act as a form of people power than can aid communities' efforts to address social problems by helping make things happen.

An example is provided by De Montfort University's Square Mile programme which has involved the university partnering with communities residing in a specific square mile of Leicester City. The CUP ran a program with undergraduate health students to provide free health checks to residents. They offered hearing tests, blood pressure checks and diabetes checks in community centres in the area. They provided this service to over 400 people, and ended up identifying 120 people with diabetes who did not know they had it, referring them on to their GP.

Capacity-Building

Combining the knowledge and people power held within universities, and applying these to community issues and efforts to address them, CUPs contribute towards building the capacity of communities to engage in collective problem-solving. Mhairi McVicar at Cardiff University's Community Gateway illustrated how a collaborative model of working can help bring community-led ideas to life by providing the expertise and resources to make things happen:

“With the pavilion project, had the community tried to take it on themselves, there's no way they could have done it all because they didn't have the capacity. But we helped build their capacity with university support. So they now get access to training and we actually work with them to set up all the systems and we facility manage it, as we were able

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships (continued)

to draw on expertise from the university and facilities management and business planning and so on. So they're just able to access a lot of information that they wouldn't have access to otherwise."

In this instance, support from the university had allowed residents of the Grangetown neighbourhood of the city to take over an unused bowls pavilion in a local park and turn it into an asset of community value to provide a new social hub for the area. The university provided support in the form of architecture academics to help design a new building, business students to develop business plans for the pavilion, students to help facilitate consultations, and even took responsibility for facility management. As such, the backing of the university helped the community to take the necessary steps to progress towards their goal of owning the pavilion.

In a more instrumentalist vein, CUPs can build the capacity of individual community organisations by supporting them with monitoring and evaluation of their services and projects, which can help them to secure future funding. Whilst many CUPs want to do more than solely provide evaluation services for local organisations, such as progress towards goals of social justice and change, often deals are done to provide support as a means of generating reciprocity in ongoing partnerships. Interestingly, Brighton University's CUPP has developed a training program for CVS groups to develop the skills of their staff

to conduct their own evaluations of their services, in order to support what they refer to as the 'community data burden' placed on third sector organisations by funders.¹

Personal Development

Another benefit of engaging in CUPs for communities is the personal and professional development it affords to its members (Martikke et al 2015). Being involved in CUPs allows individuals and organisations to develop new relationships and networks, as well as develop skills and capacities that can aide them in their personal and professional lives. Just

Just like academics, CUPs provide opportunities for residents to engage in meaningful action around the things that matter to them, whether they be pressing issues or personal passions.

like academics, CUPs provide opportunities for residents to engage in meaningful action around the things that matter to them, whether they be pressing issues or personal passions.

For Universities

Research Rankings

CUPs can support universities to achieve higher rankings based on the quality and impact of their research. As discussed earlier, CUPs support innovative academic research by bringing in new perspectives to academic inquiry, which generate new ideas and avenues of study. In addition,

¹ Brighton CUPP's joint position statement on this burden can be found here: <http://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/meicommunity/>

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships (continued)

drives towards measuring and valuing the impact of research mean that increasingly, universities must evidence how their research has benefits outside of academia. In the UK context CUPs provide a valuable vehicle for achieving consistent and meaningful impact for universities, as well as doing work to measure these impacts and feed them into impact case studies for the REF. As Rachel Pain from Durham University's Participatory Research Hub indicated, this had helped them secure support for their CUP:

“I think the key argument is to use the impact agenda. What we argued to get the funding for the participatory research hub was that it would lead to individual projects that would then have an impact, which the university can claim through impact case studies and so on”

As we have argued, CUPs act as brokers of relationships between academics and communities to support more ‘impactful’ research, helping to cultivate a culture of engaged scholarship, which contributes towards the overall research quality of the institution. Equally, given increasing attention paid to co-production as an approach to research by research councils (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016), CUPs can play a role in helping facilitate this work and shift the research cultures towards this collaborative approach.

Furthermore, in identifying research problems from communities, rather

than from gaps in academic knowledge in particular disciplines, CUPs act as a catalyst for interdisciplinary work across the university. In addressing complex issues in communities, CUPs often bring together a plethora of methods, perspectives and expertise to develop actionable solutions. This is particularly beneficial for universities who are seeking to increase their interdisciplinary research outputs.

Attracting Talent

CUPs can also benefit universities by helping them attract talented staff and students. The success of CUPs in promoting engaged, exciting projects often results in them being used as a selling point of the institution to potential candidates. This helps attract researchers and lecturers with a varied skill set and set of ambitions for pursuing the public good, contributing to a thriving academic culture at the university. As the below quote from a senior academic with experience in co-production projects suggests, academia risks losing talented and skilled individuals if its research and teaching cannot nurture their desire for meaningful work that engages a spectrum of their skills, not just those traditionally honed by academic work:

“I think younger and early career researchers don't necessarily like what they see within the academic environment in terms of, do I really want to work in a space where what people want to know is whether I've published

The Mutual Benefits of Community-University Partnerships (continued)

paper 256, rather than, have we made a difference to people's lives? And I think we're losing talented people because of that." (Anonymous Academic, UK CUP)

Equally, students are looking for more enriching educational offers from universities as they seek value for money from increased tuition fees. In facilitating varied and interesting opportunities for students to work with communities in different ways, CUPs help attract students to universities, and act as a unique selling point in a competitive market. Indeed, CUPs, such as Queen's University Belfast's Science Shop, are now tapping into this agenda to win institutional support:

"Science shops across Europe are now linking ourselves much more to drivers around student experience and student learning. And the focus of that is really very much trying to look into teaching and learning domains and look at the kind of values of science shops in supporting students' learning and student competence." (Emma McKenna, QUB Science Shop)

This works two ways, with CUPs being used by their university as a key part of their branding to attract new students. For example, De Montfort University's Square Mile program has become a central part of the university's identity, resulting in the institution re-positioning itself as 'the University of public good', in an attempt to celebrate its successes and attract staff

and students with a social conscience and desire to get involved.

Public Relations

Finally, CUPs can help to challenge notions of universities as ivory towers, detached from the local area, and they demonstrate that the institution is an active, respectful

CUPs can help to challenge notions of universities as ivory towers, detached from the local area.

member of the community.

This has long-term benefits for universities that may wish to expand their campus, or

attract students from the local area. It also helps individual academics to gain access to local people as research participants to enhance their data (Martikke et al, 2015). As this anonymous academic from a CUP in the USA put it:

"Since we tried to work in a democratic framework, listening to the community, addressing their needs, and working with them, we have come a long way to begin to repair those previous bad relationships. We try not to be a PR office for the university, we don't see ourselves in that way at all, but really through deep engaged work, long term work together, we can begin to overcome some of those past negative senses of the university."

Chapter Five:

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen

Despite the potential benefits of CUPs, making them a reality is a challenge, and there exist a number of barriers to effective community-university partnership work. However, these barriers can be overcome, and best practice from existing CUPs provides lessons about how to do this.

Engaging Academics

Research

Engaging academics in CUP work is a challenge, as they deal with busy schedules of teaching and research, and academic reward systems do not place as much value on public engagement as on traditional academic outputs (Jacobson et al, 2004). As such, academics are pressed for time to engage in CUP projects, which may not immediately appear to be in their interests (Pearce and Pearson, 2007). Mhairi McVicar explained this challenge in her work in Cardiff:

“The biggest burden we’re still seeing is getting academic buy-in, because everyone’s so stretched for research time. So it’s got to be something that either directly ties into the research needs that they already have, or it’s something they want to do because they want to support the neighbourhood.”

For CUPs to get support from faculty members, they need to facilitate projects that fit with existing academic interests. Academics are engaged in teaching and research, and thus CUPs need to prove to them that partnering with communities to

support this work will enhance their activity for little extra effort.

In terms of research, CUP projects can be designed that enhance access to data or impact for academic research. These include projects that allow academics to explore new academic avenues through applying their ideas to community settings, and engaging in conversations with non-academic partners. For example, the Netter Centre, a CUP at Pennsylvania University, engaged an ethnomusicologist researcher in a project with gospel choirs in the local community to develop an archive about this musical tradition and the culture that accompanies it. This benefitted the academic by providing access to data on a musical tradition that is absent from the academic literature, thus providing her with traditional research outputs to advance her career. It also benefitted the community by providing a means to preserve and celebrate their culture, as well as build further community through the archive project.

Teaching

Academics can also be engaged in CUP work through their teaching. CUPs can provide an opportunity for academics to engage students in community action that is occurring outside of the lecture hall as part of their learning. The service learning tradition in American universities is well established, with academics being able to support communities by partnering with organisations to enhance their teaching

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

by providing experiences for learning by doing or learning by teaching. Students undertake placements in communities to practice the skills they are learning on their course, especially within professional disciplines such as nursing, dentistry, medics and social work. Students are often required to teach the basic concepts of their courses to external, non-academic audiences as a means to develop and concretise their own learning on the course, for example physics students may have placements in local secondary schools to support children's learning. At the Netter Centre at the University of Pennsylvania, this model of engagement between the university and the community is well established, with around 200, what they call 'Academically Based Community Service' classes, running each year. Table 3 highlights some of these classes running at the University of Pennsylvania in 2017, taken from the Netter Centre website <https://www.nettercenter.upenn.edu/abcs-courses/current-courses>.

Passions

Finally, it is worth noting that CUPs will only be able to engage academics through their teaching and research commitments if the project they are proposing taps into their personal passions. No matter how easy a connection between the academic and a community partner may be, if the issue or topic doesn't resonate with the academic, they are unlikely to make the effort to change their working patterns, as Karl

Witty from Leeds Beckett's CommUNITY highlighted:

"We've found that people will only engage with community groups on things that they are passionate about. So, I think you shouldn't underestimate the importance of enthusiasm and passion. It's not just about academic skill. Academics are usually very busy and won't stick their head above the parapet and do something different unless it's something they are passionate about."

Engaging Students

Research Projects

One of the key ways that students can engage in CUP activities is through research projects. Undergraduates and Masters students can conduct community-based research as part of their dissertations. For example, Queens University in Belfast runs a Science Shop, which connects student dissertations and research projects to community research needs. The science shop receives expressions of interest for research projects from charities and community groups in Northern Ireland, and works with these organisations to develop them into projects suitable for students to carry out as part of their degree. It then seeks to find students to conduct this research through their dissertation.

PhD students can also engage in CUP work through their research. This may be on a fairly low-level of commitment - such as

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

School	Course Title	Description
Nursing	Obesity and Society	Students learn about the scientific, cultural, social and economic factors contributing to obesity, as well as treatment options. This learning is complimented by weekly placements in local projects dealing with nutrition, cooking and exercise.
Fine Art	The Big Picture: Mural Arts in Philadelphia	Students learn about the history and practice of mural movements, seeing mural art as a tool for social change. They develop these skills and this perspective through a mural design and painting project with local secondary school students and community groups.
Environment-al Science	Urban Asthma Epidemic	Students learn about the epidemiology of urban asthma, the causes of the asthma crisis, and the nature of environmental factors that trigger it. Students are supported in this learning by working with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia on their Community Asthma Prevention Program. They teach about asthma prevention to parents in local community centres.
English	Essay, Blog, Tweet: Non-Fiction Now!	Students develop creative writing and critiquing skills through a project designed to promote safe spaces amongst local children. Students experiment in writing non-fiction narratives on this theme, launching these on a young people-focussed website. Local young people participate in this project by helping inform the narratives.
Maths	Community Algebra Initiative	Students develop communication and teaching skills by learning how to teach school students basic algebra concepts in weekly workshops. This develops undergraduates' transferrable skills, whilst addressing teacher shortages in West Philadelphia schools.
Political Science	The Politics of Food and Agriculture	Students use course readings and their community service to analyse the institutions, ideas, interests, social movements, and leadership that shape "the politics of food" in different arenas. Students reflect on their placements in different community organisations working to address hunger and food poverty in West Philadelphia, to support their learning. Students benefit through direct experience with organisations involved in shaping the topics of their class. Community groups benefit through increased manpower.

Table 3: Service Learning Module at the University of Pennsylvania

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

running workshops with community groups that translate their ideas into public benefit - or on a more long-term scale, with PhD students reshaping their project to become a piece of community-based research once they have received their funding. In this sense, CUPs can provide the resources and access to relationships which can transform PhD projects to meet community need. Also, CUPs can result in the creation of PhD studentships by the community, with the CUP allowing for research projects to be developed by community members, before employing a PhD student to lead on them.

Modules

As mentioned above, students can be engaged in CUP projects through a compulsory element of their core course modules. Explaining an example of how this works in practice, Mhairi McVicar from Cardiff University stated:

“We developed a project at the business school where you’ll have 250 undergraduate students respond to one question set by somebody in the community who wants to set up a business forum. He invited them to submit ideas about how to set up a business forum and a shop local campaign, and the students wrote 250 essays. The forum started to whittle it down to 11, and then to five projects which graduate students then picked up and ran with over the summer. So you had five graduate students working

directly with a community partner to then identify other areas for development which will then go back as a question to undergrads again, and then 250 more undergrads will then explore that issue.”

This example highlights that CUPs can engage students by developing partnerships around the modules they are already enrolled on. The module only required a short alteration, re-jigging the coursework question from a purely theoretical one, to one that was applied to a real-world problem. This ensured that students’ academic efforts were aligned with community needs and interests, enriching student learning by linking their work to a ‘live’ project and supporting community development efforts. This is particularly important when students are demanding more from their learning experiences in response to higher tuition fees, and in the UK context, it connects with the development of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

There is also scope to engage students through the development of CUP-specific elective modules that are offered across all disciplines, which seek to place students in projects with communities in order to develop skills in community engagement, leadership, or action research.

Volunteering

Finally, students can get involved in CUP projects through volunteering. Many CUPs tap into student volunteers to make projects happen, often marketing these as

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

a way to develop skills and experiences. Some universities also record student volunteer hours on a certificate which is awarded to them on graduation alongside their degree. This is good practice because without some tangible benefit for the student, volunteering can be a risky engagement strategy, as students will often prioritise their degree work, or social lives over volunteering.

Emma McKenna from Queen's University Belfast's Science Shop illustrated the potential drawbacks of engaging students through volunteering. Talking about her experience of students carrying out a research project for a community partner on a voluntary basis, rather than through their degree program, she stated:

“A student who takes a research project on as a volunteer will never complete it, and that's just my experience. If it's not viewed by them as part of their degree they will not do it. You know, people think they've got time to spend and then they get a job or they get pregnant or other work comes along. And they just don't finish. This kind of research isn't a suitable volunteer activity for students in my view. It needs to be strongly linked to their curriculum in order to guarantee that the community partner actually gets a result at the end”

This is not to say that students will not engage with communities through volunteering, but that if their engagement

with CUP projects can be facilitated through compulsory aspects of their degree, such as research and modules, they are more likely to commit to getting and staying involved.

Engaging Communities Participation

Experiences of traditional academic research in communities have left many people in a state of 'research fatigue', with people tired of participating in projects to provide their opinions and beliefs, and never hearing from the researcher again.

Experiences of traditional academic research in communities have left many people in a state of 'research fatigue', with people tired of participating in projects to provide their opinions and beliefs,

and never hearing from the researcher again. Universities and community organisations have different institutional demands and to a certain extent exist in different worlds, with different patterns of working, different priorities and different pressures (Tableman, 2005; McNall et al, 2009). This presents one of the main barriers to securing the engagement of communities in CUP projects, and as discussed earlier in this report, the key to engaging communities in CUP work is to build meaningful relationships between them and the university, and develop

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

high levels of trust. There is also a need to demonstrate that CUPs are not merely about research, but also about action. It is imperative for CUPs to always be striving towards meaningful action to address issues if communities are to be convinced that their investment in them is worthwhile (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016).

Another barrier to securing participation from community groups and residents in CUP projects can be a sense of apathy about the point of doing community-based research projects and engaging with others to solve problems. Many communities have historically been marginalised from decision-making apparatuses and sidelined whilst other agencies have attempted to solve problems for them (Wills, 2016). As such, many people lack the skills, self-confidence and inclination to get involved in CUP projects. This poses a major challenge to CUPs, as it leaves them without people to engage with, and can result in the university simply doing things for the community, rather than with them.

Careful work is needed to break through this apathy and engage community members in a different culture of working. Some CUPs are more successful at this than others, and there is always an ongoing struggle to engage not only academics and students, but community members as well. This often requires a deep level of engagement with communities, exemplified by the embedded approach to project initiation discussed earlier, in which strong

relationships are built with individuals and key representatives to help engage people in collective action. An example of best practice in this instance comes from University Neighbourhood Partners (UNP), a CUP based at the University of Utah.

UNP works with residents in the west-side of Salt Lake City to develop projects for mutual benefit that develop the community's capacity to develop political voice and shape their neighbourhood. UNP engages residents by employing people to develop these relationships in the neighbourhood through regular one to one meetings and conversations. They are also based from a house in the neighbourhood, which was donated to them by the City council, which acts as a base from which to meet residents on a daily basis. On top of this, they run the Westside Leadership Institute, which runs an annual leadership program to train local residents as civic leaders, equipping them with the relationships, skills and belief to engage in collective action locally. These people are the drivers behind the UNP's projects, creating ideas and making things happen. The UNP then links these people and their projects to activities at the university to help support their development.

Another issue preventing community members from participating in CUP projects can be the lack of time available. People are balancing busy schedules around their families and jobs, and have little time to engage in CUP projects outside

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

of these. Again, this poses challenges for universities who want to engage with communities for mutual benefit. One way of dealing with this is to pool the people power available to CUPs, with students being employed to do the jobs that community members have no time for, thus spreading the load and relieving the burden on communities. Another method is to ensure that the issues which the CUP is working

It is important for CUPs to always be driving towards action on issues, rather than just research, as community partners will not commit to work that they SEE as having no practical benefit.

on are those that matter most to communities. People will only commit their time to engaging in CUP projects if the projects are addressing the real issues of a community (Chatterton,

2016). In this respect, it is important for CUPs to always be driving towards action on issues, rather than just research, as community partners will not commit to work that they as having no practical benefit (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016).

Representation

The need to share the load of CUP work amongst students and to conduct projects on things that matter to communities, points towards the importance of community representation in CUPs. If there are instances where the university is

going to do work for the community, then the community needs to have a degree of control, and for real issues to be identified for CUPs, community control over their activities is essential.

There are a number of ways that CUPs try to ensure that the community's needs and interests are represented in the decisions they make. The primary way is through relationships, with CUPs being embedded in the social networks of their communities, thus making them part of that community and attuned to the sentiments and issues of its members, as Bob Brown from Michigan State University's University Outreach & Engagement explained:

“There’s not a formal process that we go through to identify issues. One of the things is when you’re deeply engaged in a community you know all the time what the issues are, and across Michigan and the mid-West and industrial cities where a lot of the industry has gone away, they’re real similar.... so what is the most critical thing that people are talking about? And when you’re engaged in a community and if you get the time to become part of various community groups, these things come to the surface. So with us there’s never a problem of identifying issues”

Another way that CUPs ensure that community voice is heard in their activities is by hiring community members as CUP staff. This effectively cuts out the

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

middle man by placing them, rather than university staff, in brokerage roles between the community and the university. For example, Bradford University hired 6 people who had grown up in the city as ‘community associates’, placed within one academic faculty each to develop relationships between academics and community groups, and develop strategies to increase community engagement (Pearce and Pearson, 2007).

Additionally, CUPs ensure community representation through the creation of boards, committees and steering groups that include community representatives. These bodies oversee the activities of CUPs, providing a long-term vision, and deciding which projects get the go ahead. Reporting on the UNP at Utah University, one academic explained the purpose of such boards:

“They created a community review board, I was on it originally, but it was about creating a kind of review board so that anybody who wanted to do a project within this community who was from the university would basically have their proposal vetted by a committee that would ask questions like, “Well how does this benefit the community?”

Going back to the discussion of place-based CUPs earlier, when trying to ensure that community voice is represented in CUPs, the scale of engagement is all important. Stoecker (2003) argues that

the way to ensure that CUPs represent the communities they aim to serve is to adopt a grassroots approach that identifies those people who have the respect of the community, and the authority to speak on their behalf. Often, this necessitates operating at a very local level, identifying the key ‘nodes’ in local social networks, and working with these people (Rowson et al, 2010).

These strategies are often complimented by regular consultation exercises, which provide a snapshot of the wider community’s experiences and wishes at any given time, to feed into the CUPs strategies for action. However, ensuring representation of the community in CUPs is not easy, as any community, however defined, contains multiple competing and conflicting perspectives and interests, and thus care must be taken to ensure that CUPs represent the pluralistic nature of communities.

Pluralism

As touched upon in Chapter 2, the plurality of issues, interests and beliefs in communities is a key factor that universities have to negotiate when setting up CUPs. Ensuring community representation in CUPs means reaching out beyond the usual voices and community contacts already linked to the university (Chatterton, 2016). Many CUPs are driven by a desire to respond to the pluralism of issues, interests and beliefs that are neglected by traditional academia.

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

Talking about the result of the UK referendum on membership of the EU in 2016, one academic respondent with experience in a number of CUPs discussed how the result revealed a gap between the world view of a large section of citizens, and the views held by those in universities. Many academics could not understand why people voted to leave the EU. A recent survey by the Times Higher Education (Morgan, 2016) backs this up: 88.5% of faculty within UK HEIs intended to vote 'Remain' in the EU referendum, with 9.5% for 'Leave'. Compared to the results of the referendum, when the general public voted 51.9% to leave, the gap in opinion between people within universities and the wider community appears very wide.

CUPs can help to bring these different worlds together, but it will take work to make those with alternative views feel like their voice is valid. Moreover, this is very difficult to do. Meaningful engagement with communities involves people in universities giving up some control over knowledge production (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016). It means taking seriously the beliefs

and experiences of different communities, and valuing them on their own terms. This challenges the idea that academics know

best, and prompts universities to listen to communities, no matter how uncomfortable this can be. This is not to say that people within universities have to accept or agree with the alternative views of others, but they have to be open to understanding them. CUPs can help to do this, by providing the vehicle through which community voices can be heard and debated in a safe space.

Capacity

Another key challenge for CUPs is securing the resources to develop their capacity to engage meaningfully and effectively with communities. Whilst relatively well-funded in the USA, especially at land-grant universities, interview evidence reveals that CUPs in the UK are under-resourced for the demands made on them. This quote from the academic director of a UK-based CUP in Durham illustrates the resources needed to make the CUP work:

“We had a two and a half day a week post initially, and it wasn't enough, it just wasn't enough; it takes a lot of time. It's really kind of labour intensive work. A fulltime staff member would be amazing because it's mailing lists, bulletins, organising events, you know, you need somebody to do all of that. And also all the mentoring, the going out and visiting organisations, actually running the training itself. So it's pretty busy and you need to make sure there's somebody really good there, who's going to be able to do that higher level stuff.”

This challenges the idea that academics know best, and prompts universities to listen to communities, no matter how uncomfortable this can be.

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

Running CUPs is labour intensive. Staff time is needed to build relationships, maintain them, attend events, organise meetings, organise training sessions, run events, manage administration, organise communications and develop projects. Lessons from Cardiff University's Community Gateway illustrate the work involved and Mhairi McVicar recommended that a fulltime member of staff be employed to take responsibility for it:

“I think that having a full time project manager is really crucial because it means that there's always somebody to check on what's going on. Let's say if we've had a project where we've got a school gardening club and a gardening group working with researchers who are interested in environmental analysis long term. Sometimes the specifics to get it started it take quite a lot of management just to make sure that everyone's on the same page, everyone can work together. So if university researchers show up for a gardening session but the gardening session has changed their days and there's nobody there, it's difficult. As these projects start to run there's a lot of management and there's a lot of things like personality issues and different agendas and different themes. And there needs to be a way of managing those so that everyone gets their point of understanding so that they can then start to run a project themselves.”

The above quotation illustrates the role of

CUP workers in 'translating' between the two worlds. These people must facilitate collaborations between people and groups who inhabit different worlds, with different agendas. In order to identify where mutual benefits lie, and how partnerships can add value to both sides, CUP workers need to carefully manage communication between the university and the community and help find mutual ground. This is not an easy task. In the UK at least, it is clear that the emerging CUPs remain under-funded.

Impact

One of the key challenges facing CUPs is in achieving and evidencing the impact of their work. If part of the justification of CUPs is their ability to allow research to have an impact in society, then CUPs need to think about how to do this, and documenting their positive (and negative) effects.

Infrastructure for Impact

Pain et al (2015: 3-4) define impact as “the social, economic or environmental changes that result from a particular intervention”. Conceptualising impact from the perspective of co-production and engaged research, rather than seeing impact as a discrete outcome of research, they argue that impact is ‘a collaborative, transdisciplinary praxis, that involves collaborators from different backgrounds coming together to undertake research with a common purpose’. Impact is thus a collective effort to reflect and act

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

critically and creatively on reality in order to transform it.

Given this understanding, Pain et al (2015) present a number of things that characterise impact. They argue that impacts occur at a variety of scales, ranging from effects in individual attitudes and skills, to community-level benefits, through to wider policy change. Impacts also occur during the research process, rather than at the end, and that impact is mutual, with benefits flowing between universities and communities in a reciprocal fashion. They also argue that impact takes time to achieve, as the complexities of bringing people together for collective action does not happen quickly. Impact is also serendipitous, with impacts occurring through chance encounters, unintended consequences of actions and in response to changing circumstances. Finally they suggest that impacts rely on good relationships, and that meaningful impacts are hard to achieve where strong relationships of trust and mutual understanding do not exist.

CUPs can help to achieve meaningful impacts for universities and communities by providing a vehicle for the praxis of impact to unfold.

praxis of impact to unfold. As permanent

bodies at universities, which operate outside of time-frames imposed by grant funding and academic cycles, CUPs allow for impacts to be developed over long periods, with effects from individual projects building on each other to begin to address complex and deep-seated issues (Beacon North East, 2011). As Rachel Pain, Director of Durham University's Participatory Research Hub explained:

“It’s really not the kind of thing that can be done in a six month project, but if academics, either individually or collectively through these centres that we’re talking about, have those long term relationships with certain charities for example, then the impact doesn’t finish but we’re constantly talking, trying different things, helping them out, going to conferences with them, they’ll do something for us, and then suddenly they’ll phone up one Monday morning and say, “Can we name you in this press release?”. It’s those kind of long term relationships.”

The long-term approach of CUPs to facilitating impact means that relationships between the university and community are maintained over time, beyond the time-frame of any individual project. This allows for impact to be on-going, and open to serendipity, with members of CUPs organised in a way that allows them to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise as part of an ongoing effort to address community issues. As such, CUPs go

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

some way towards shifting the institutional infrastructure and culture of universities to address the differences in time, openness and relationships required for engaged scholarship to reach its full potential (Pain et al, 2015).

Policy Impact

A further challenge concerned with achieving impact is in translating community-based research to have an effect in policy circles. Many of the issues faced by communities are complex and long-standing and require engagement with government policy, alongside localised projects to address needs, as part of a diversified strategy for change.

Most CUPs reported difficulties in engaging in effective policy work as part of their operations, with grass-roots work being favoured in order to invest in the relationships that underpin them.

Most CUPs reported difficulties in engaging in effective policy work as part of their operations, with grass-roots work being favoured in order to invest in the relationships

that underpin them. UK CUPs in particular are not at the stage where they feel strong enough to engage in sustained policy work, although the appetite amongst practitioners is there.

However, the unique nature of CUPs as bodies with one foot in the world of credible

academic research, and the other rooted in the issues and interests of communities, puts them in a unique place to have a meaningful impact on policy. Academic research has more weight than claims made by communities in policy circles. It is a form of 'credentialed knowledge' that is deemed as more valid than the latter, and can demand a hearing from decision-makers (Boyte, 2003). CUPs can play a connecting role by giving the grievances and ideas of communities more weight in these circles by validating them through academic research.

Equally, by embedding policy work in the issues and ideas of communities, CUPs can help generate the grassroots support that is needed to put new ideas on the agenda of policy-makers, by mobilising community action around ideas as part of campaigns for change (Harney et al, 2016). If the issues that CUPs work on really matter to the communities involved, then there is scope for large-scale mobilisation to force new ideas, and proposals for solutions onto the agendas of policy-makers.

Moreover, the permanence of CUPs, in relation to the short-term nature of stand-alone research projects allows for community issues to be worked on over longer time periods than is possible in traditional models of academic research. The issue, and the relationships around that issue can be held by the CUP, which can then utilise stand-alone research

Challenges of Making Community-University Partnerships Happen (continued)

Projects can be built upon over time, with work being done to translate research findings into a language that speaks to policy makers, allowing for a sustained effort for change.

projects in a more strategic way to advance towards policy change (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016). Projects can be built upon over time, with work being

done to translate research findings into a language that speaks to policy makers, allowing for a sustained effort for change. In addition, CUPs governed by a board of directors or steering group can more easily develop strategies for addressing community issues through policy work, and by entering into coalitions with other organisations acting around similar issues. This is particularly effective when CUPs develop the capacity and skills of communities to engage in this work through training opportunities.

Chapter Six:

Community-University Partnerships as Infrastructures for Impact and Democracy

Whether imposed by pressures from the outside, or driven by those working to shift their culture from the inside, UK universities are being transformed. They are becoming more open to, and concerned about, the world and communities outside their walls.

For some institutions, this has given rise to weak forms of engagement and superficial attempts to have an ‘impact’. This is dangerous as it risks reproducing the position of universities as detached, ivory-tower institutions that use public money to further support academic agendas and interests rather than those of the public. Furthermore it wastes a golden opportunity for universities to re-invent themselves as civic institutions by committing themselves to working alongside communities to develop effective responses to some of society’s most pressing concerns.

CUPs illustrate that another sort of impact is possible. Through practising meaningful co-production in research, and developing teaching activities rooted in real world problems and the development of potential solutions, they are helping their universities to become more responsive, accountable and effective.

This work is arguably more essential than ever before. The current public mood is one of widespread dissatisfaction with established political institutions (Chwalisz, 2015). An anti-establishment sentiment has grown and had profound effects on

the political landscape of the UK. Part of the reason for this is a feeling that long-standing community problems have been ignored by mainstream politics and politicians, as well as the wider ‘establishment’.

This sentiment is a threat to universities that are perceived by many to be part of this very establishment. Rightly or wrongly, academia is often seen as being the realm of detached experts and intellectuals whose ideas about how to shape society for the better are part of the problem, rather than the solution (Morgan, 2016). If universities

If universities are to avoid being seen as at odds with wider society, rather than in service to it, then they need to find effective mechanisms to engage with society in a more meaningful way.

are to avoid being seen as at odds with wider society, rather than in service to it, then they need to find effective mechanisms to engage with society in a more meaningful way.

American CUPs often frame their role as being important ‘mediating institutions’ that facilitate democracy and CUPs could give UK universities the opportunity to do the same. Whilst being unable to address the disaffection amongst citizens solely on their own, CUPs have a role in re-engaging citizens in a local democratic politics of collective problem-solving, working in collaboration with universities to develop

Community-University Partnerships as Infrastructures for Impact and Democracy (continued)

the skills and knowledge needed to address the issues that matter to people.

In doing this, we argue that place can play an important role in acting as a container for building relationships and trust, for framing our approach to problem-solving in a holistic way, and for acting as democratic laboratories where citizens can come together to develop sustained experiments intending to solve some of their most deep-seated and important concerns. Place-based CUPs can provide tangible benefits to the universities, academics, students and communities involved, but they may also play a role in rebuilding a civic culture of participation that is now vital to the functioning of a healthy democracy in the UK.

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