



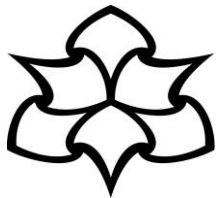
Arts & Humanities
Research Council



*Co-producing diversity: re-imagine your workforce
as a co-produced space*

Professor Kate Pahl

Manchester Metropolitan University



**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

Imagine
connecting communities through research

Connected Communities Programme Aim

To research 'community' with, by and for communities

- Understanding the changing nature of communities in their contexts, and the role of communities in sustaining and enhancing our quality of life

Through...

- Interdisciplinary research with a strong arts & humanities element
- Collaborative research with communities at all stages of the research process

My journey

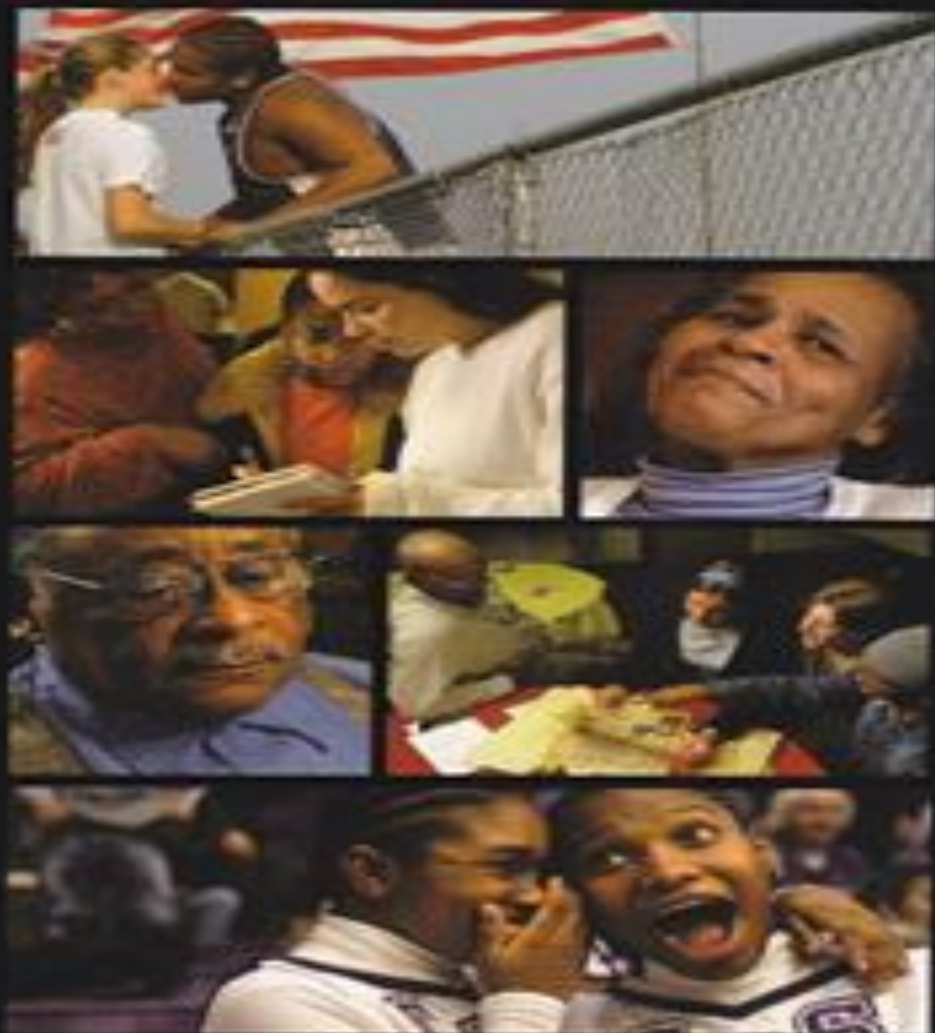
- Co-curating a museum exhibition with a group of South Asian families in Rotherham (Pahl and Pollard 2010, Pahl and Rowsell 2010)
- Co-producing a number of projects in Rotherham with communities with a focus on imagination, arts, literacy and language and culture
- Began to work with, not on communities, and to co-write as well as co- research with the communities
- This then made me think differently about universities, and what we do, and cultural organisations, and what they do (Pahl 2016).

Where I went

- I then turned to collaborative way of working in which participants became researchers.
- They devised and conducted projects that then articulated their ideas about literacy.
- I turned from a model where I took data from a field to one where I learned from the field, alongside a team of community researchers...

THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDDLETOWN

Exploring Muncie's African American Community



EDITED BY

Re-thinking knowledge production practices in communities

After 30 years of working in the community, I advocate the view that everybody holds the key to knowledge. It can be found in every community and every house in the land, although we put different value on that knowledge. People in our communities have life experiences and cultural experiences. Through these they acquire their own knowledge base, and we should not disregard this when we work with communities. Through this project we were able to celebrate 'funds of knowledge' (González *et al.*, 2005) in our community. (Rasool 2017: 314)

Material knowledge



Portrait by Zahir Rafiq

The 'Imagine' project

- Community partners came together to plan the 'Imagine' project in 2011.
- They came up with the ideas, eg 'Silk and Steel' 'Re-imagining the future' 'Portraits of British Muslims'.
- People were given the same financial support as academics and their knowledge was treated seriously.
- Time for writing was set aside. Meetings were held to set up the discussions and co-write the book.
- Oral storytelling was used when writing was not appropriate.

Rotherham, June 2017



Writing the book together

- Horizontal writing structure – all voices were important
- Artists and poets (Shahin Shah, Zahir Rafiq, Cassie Limb, Nathan Gibson, Ray Hearne, Ryan Bramley) also had equal weight
- Historians listened to local history experts
- Parents co-wrote their chapter on parenting
- Young people involved in poetry and writing and photography
- Multiple and multimodal representations – visual, poetic, artistic.

Theory/Living knowledge

The mission of collaborative ethnography is to bring the academic research endeavour closer to communities, and to generate knowledge together, which is more authentic, representative and negotiated with communities. The questions of 'Whose knowledge?' and 'Who speaks for whom?' is an issue that should be asked of all research – and indeed all knowledge claims. In this book, we can see an emerging parity in the status of the different voices and knowledge presented.

(Robert Rutherford and Maria O'Beirne, Department of Communities and Local Government, 'Re-Imagining Contested Communities' 2018)

Repositioning communities

- This kind of research allows communities that have been dis-empowered to renegotiate their boundaries that have been set by others and challenge public discourses.
- Communities are never static, they are evolving and cohesion is happening all around us at a micro-level which questions the parallel lives discourse but it remains invisible.
- Arts methodology is therefore a powerful tool in capturing the changes within communities
- Authoring and writing the book ourselves gave us ownership over the process of re-imagining contested communities. (Zanib Rasool)

Collaborative working for diversity

Collaborative methodologies recognise that all participants –regardless of training, credentials or situations – possess valid forms of knowledge and expertise.

Collaborative methodologies ask researchers to work alongside research participants to co-produce knowledge that is mutually accessible and relevant.

Embracing the actual human relationships at the centre of collaborative research opens all who participate to the possibility of being changed by each other. (Campbell et al 2018)

Re-imagining contested communities

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES
Creating a new knowledge landscape

Connecting Rotherham
through research

edited by
Elizabeth Campbell, Kate Pahl, Elizabeth Pente
and Zanib Rasool



What does this mean for the cultural sector?

- Need to find ways of breaking down barriers and respecting everyday knowledge.
- Knowledge within communities is immense – of the past, present and future, skills, including fishing, sewing, languages and cultures
- There are different ways of representing knowledge – visually, spatially, orally
- Learning to listen differently (Rasool 2017)

Questions for you:

- Whose voices count in cultural organisations and why?
- How do we incorporate diverse voices in the cultural sector?
- How does the cultural sector look different when you draw on participants' ideas?
- What activities would you do?
- What are the implications for your productions?

Emerging publications

- Campbell, E. Pahl, K. Pente, E., and Rasool, Z. (Eds.) (2018) *Re-imagining Contested Communities: Connecting Rotherham Through Research*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Escott, H & K. Pahl (2017): Learning from Ninjas: young people's films as a lens for an expanded view of literacy and language, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, DOI: 10.1080/01596306.2017.1405911
- Grenfell, M. and Pahl, K. (2019) *Bourdieu, Language-based Ethnographies and Reflexivity: Putting Theory into Practice*. New York: Routledge
- Pahl, K. and Rowsell, J. with D. Collier, S. Pool, Z. Rasool and T. Trzeczak (2019) *Living Literacies*. Massachusetts: MIT Press