Co-production Research Toolkit

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Acknowledgements

This toolkit is part of a suite of resources to enhance co-production and participatory research practice at the University of Leeds. The project is **'Capacity building through the interdisciplinary Co-production Network for enhanced best practice in participatory research'**. Professor Gehan Selim, Deputy Director of the Leeds Social Sciences Institute (LSSI), is the Principal Investigator with Professor Louise Waite, LSSI Director, as Co-Investigator on the project. Together they oversaw the preparation of this toolkit which was written by Ruth Smith and Natalie Jackson on behalf of the LSSI. Ruth Smith was employed by LSSI as a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow to support the development of the Co-production Research Toolkit and to the production of the case studies. Natalie Jackson is the Communications and Graduate Co-ordinator at LSSI and co-ordinated the production of professional photography, videography, artwork and promotion of this project. This toolkit also benefitted greatly from oversight and input from Alison Lundbeck, LSSI Research and Innovation Development Manager. The toolkit was supported by funding from Research England under their Participatory Approaches Fund. Finally, we would like to thank all those people who generously contributed their time and resources to the case studies references throughout this toolkit, and for allowing us to showcase your research.

Foreword

The Leeds Social Sciences Institute (LSSI) helps to foster relationships and interdisciplinary research collaborations to maximise the impact of social science research, and enhance the skills of the next generation of researchers at the University of Leeds.

We believe that research excellence is enriched by bringing together disciplines, professions and people to solve real world problems, ensuring that high quality research informs societal change. Social science research is fundamental in responding to the complex global challenges facing contemporary society. At LSSI, our aim is to raise the profile of social science and its significant role in framing novel interdisciplinary and cross-institutional research collaborations.

The LSSI are working to identify the breadth and diversity of participatory research practice across the University, looking across disciplines and methodologies. This toolkit is part of a suite of resources for participatory research capacity to support continuous learning and working in co-production. The aim of this toolkit is to reflect the diversity of researchers, topics, and uses of participatory research across the University of Leeds, and act as a 'best practice' guide for researchers looking to engage in co-production and participatory research practice.

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Deputy Director
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Contents

Purpose of Toolkit	05
Co-production and Participatory Research Practice at Leeds	06
What is Co-production?	07
The Co-production Network at The University of Leeds	10
Co-production and Participatory Research	15
Examples of Participatory Research Methodologies	18
Interdisciplinarity	23
Principles of Co-production	25
How to Approach Positionality in Co-production	27
Role of the Researcher	30
Co-production Process	31
How To Value And Demonstrate Impact in Co-production	32
Opportunities that Co-production Offers	36
Barriers and Challenges in Implementing Co-production	39
Recommendations for Enabling and Improving Co-production	42
Building Your Network at the University of Leeds	46
Next Steps	49

Case studies

1	Adam Crawford	14
2	Paul Wilson and Marie-Avril Berthet	16
3	Sahla Aroussi	17
4	Jen Dyer	19
5	Jim House	21
6	Barbara Evans	21
7	Jo Cutter and Gabriella Alberti	22
8	Martin Zebracki	24
9	Adriaan van Klinken	29
10	Julia Martin-Ortega and Silvia Olvera-Hernandez	33
11	Amelia DeFalco	34
12	Ingrid Arotoma	35
13	Gehan Selim	36
14	Lata Narayanaswamy and Winnie Bedigen	38
15	Elisabetta Adami	41
16	Mel Flynn and Ingrid Arotoma	48

Written case study
Podcast
Video

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Purpose of toolkit

This 'Toolkit' highlights best practice in participatory research at the University of Leeds, and identifies key priorities for innovative interdisciplinary methods development.

There are FOUR AIMS for this toolkit:

1. Provide case studies and exploration of research findings;
2. Identify emerging and innovative research areas;
3. Identify opportunities for new partnerships;
4. Build an evidence base to support the LSSI Co-production Network's future work

The toolkit will consider issues that can potentially cut across social sciences and humanities research such as skills development, cultural value, community engagement, policy making, equitable partnership working, and issues of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Intended audience

This toolkit is aimed at early career researchers and academics looking to engage in co-production and participatory research practice. The content highlights best practice in co-production, how to approach working with communities and external stakeholders, and the challenges of these approaches and methodologies.

We hope the toolkit serves as a point of reference for researchers interested in co-production, and will help to develop new channels of networking, knowledge exchange and interactive public engagement.

How to use the toolkit

The toolkit is structured to help you understand what 'co-production' means when it comes to research, what this looks like in different contexts, and how you can approach co-production in your work.

Co-production is a broad term and often used as a synonym or umbrella term for similar approaches: co-creation, co-design, participatory research. This toolkit will help you to understand what is meant by each term – where they overlap and the key differences.

We use a range of relevant case studies as evidence of multi-disciplinary co-production research across the University of Leeds. These case studies have been selected to provide context to the opportunities and challenges involved in co-production – helping us to draw out the key principles and recommendations for enabling and improving co-production research.

This toolkit is part of a suite of resources to enhance co-production and participatory research capacity at the University of Leeds. You can find more, as well as links to all the case studies referenced within this toolkit, on the LSSI website.

You can follow us on Twitter **@UoLSSI**

For general enquiries please contact **lssi@leeds.ac.uk**

Co-production and Participatory Research Practice at Leeds

1 ESRC Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre

2 Experiences of Co-production and Participatory Research

3 Gender and Resistance to Violent Extremism: Untold Stories of Everyday Resistance to Violent Extremism in Kenya

4 Mixed Ability Sports

5 Shantytowns and the City: Colonial Power Relations in Algiers and Casablanca, 920-1962

6 The Shit Flow Diagram Promotion Initiative

7 Engaging stakeholders in the Labour Mobility in Transition: A Multi-actor Study of the Re-regulation of Migrant Work in 'Low-skilled' Sectors (LIMITS)

8 Queer Memorials: International Comparative Perspectives on Sexual Diversity and Social Inclusivity (QMem)

9 Tales of Sexuality and Faith: The Ugandan LGBT Refugee Life Story Project

10 PerformingChange

11 Imagining Posthuman Care

12 PhD: Participatory Filmmaking in the Peruvian Amazon

13 The Living Museum of Umm Qais

14 Indigenous Methodologies, Meaningful Co-production and Decolonisation

15 PanMeMic: Interaction and Communication in the Pandemic and Beyond

16 Early Career Perspectives on Co-production

What is Co-production?

Co-production has emerged as one of the key concepts in understanding knowledge-policy interactions (Bandola-Gill, Arthur and Leng, 2022). It is part of an evolving cluster of approaches (including participatory research, knowledge co-creation) that describe "*collaborative processes involving diverse types of expertise, knowledge and actors to produce context-specific knowledge and pathways towards a sustainable future.*" (Norström et al., 2020).

Through explicit equal recognition of multiple ways of knowing and doing, co-production facilitates the democratisation of science, policy and practice, and supports effective policy responses to emerging global challenges such as hunger, climate crises and pandemics through making space for pluriversal approaches to problem solving and acknowledging the complementarity in different knowledge systems.

"These participants were definitely never percieved as Guinea pigs but as core researchers - people that would bring their own knowledge to the table and in the discussion"

Elisabetta Adami

Co-production challenges what we view as credible and legitimate 'knowledge', how this is produced and by whom. There is a growing consensus that this type of knowledge is not produced by academics alone, but rather requires collective knowledge-making across different groups of stakeholders.

Stepping away from harmful terminology like project 'beneficiaries' to knowledge *co-creators and collaborators* helps to ensure equity in research partnerships.

Engaging marginalised groups

Co-production is praised for giving voice to those who may not have previously been included in knowledge 'production' and decision-making arenas. Engaging marginalised groups – women, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities – in the research process can be both empowering and also lead to better research outcomes. 'Participation' in theory thus gives choice and voice to marginalised communities.

"Co-production has to meaningfully speak to not just decision makers, but to wider decision making processes - because the communities that we are claiming to work with have to have a voice in those places where what we might describe as 'power' is being exercised"

Lata Narayanaswamy

Spectrum of participation

Participation is a spectrum – where there are varying degrees or shades of participation. For example, engaging communities or stakeholders right from the beginning of project design and conceptualisation is different to engaging them during project implementation once methodologies and sampling have already been agreed. This could be viewed as a spectrum from co-production to consultation.

'Participation' has become a buzzword in development policy and research circles where it can be used to falsely portray moral authority (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). We should not, therefore, regard 'participatory research' as a golden stamp of success as there are varying forms of effective participation – meaning we need to look further at not just which ideas count, but who gets to express them. We also need to pay attention to who is participating, in what and for whose benefit.

Whose knowledge counts?

Addressing today's global challenges – from climate change, poverty, to peace and security – requires a rethinking of what we value as knowledge, and, more critically, whose knowledge we value.

Creating 'evidence-based' policy and programming requires assessment of what constitutes 'evidence'. Yet not all evidence is created equally – where 'hierarchies of evidence' attempt to rank different research methods according to the strength of their findings (Milbank et al., 2021).

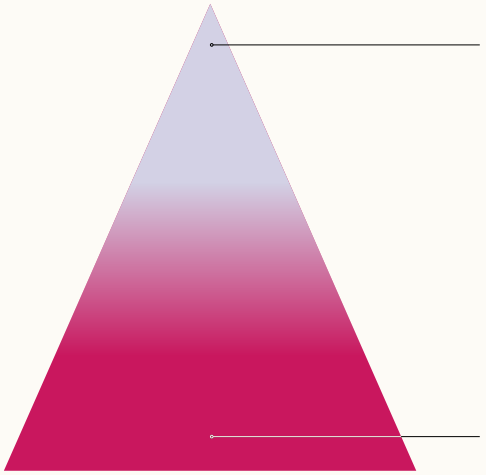
This legitimising of certain knowledges and forms of evidence often relegates traditional knowledge systems to the lowest level. This is partly owing to how such traditional knowledge is stored and passed on – often held in oral rather than written forms, and holistic rather than specialist, traditional knowledge is often manifested in acts of teachings, storytelling, folklore, songs, poems, art, dance, objects and ceremonies. In contrast, dominant, often western, 'scientific' knowledge has been perceived as objective, exclusive, and the realm of experts (Milbank et al., 2021).

Because of this, Indigenous Peoples' and other traditional knowledge systems are often regarded as un- or less scientific, anecdotal, and inapplicable to and/or incapable of addressing emerging global challenges.

Co-production removes hierarchies in knowledge production, valuing all knowledge systems as legitimate and recognising the importance of equal partnerships and collaborations to reframe how knowledge is produced.

The recognition of Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge systems as valuable is not new, and there has long been acknowledgement that Indigenous Peoples are well placed to provide expert contributions in approaches to global challenges.

Conventional hierarchy of knowledge systems



Western science:
'Scientific' knowledge that is perceived as objective is held as the gold standard – for example from Randomised Control Trials

Traditional/Indigenous knowledge:
Lived experience and anecdotal evidence are relegated to the position of lowest quality

Co-production of knowledge

Western science

Traditional/Indigenous science

The Co-production Network at The University of Leeds

What is the network?

The Co-production Network at the University of Leeds is a thriving community of researchers from across disciplines with a shared interest in participatory, engaged methodologies and citizen science that puts those with lived experience at the heart of the research process.

How did the network begin?

A workshop was organised by the LSSI and the culture theme with Leeds Arts and Humanities Research Institute (LAHRI) in March 2019 in recognition that there is substantial interest in co-production based research in each interdisciplinary area.

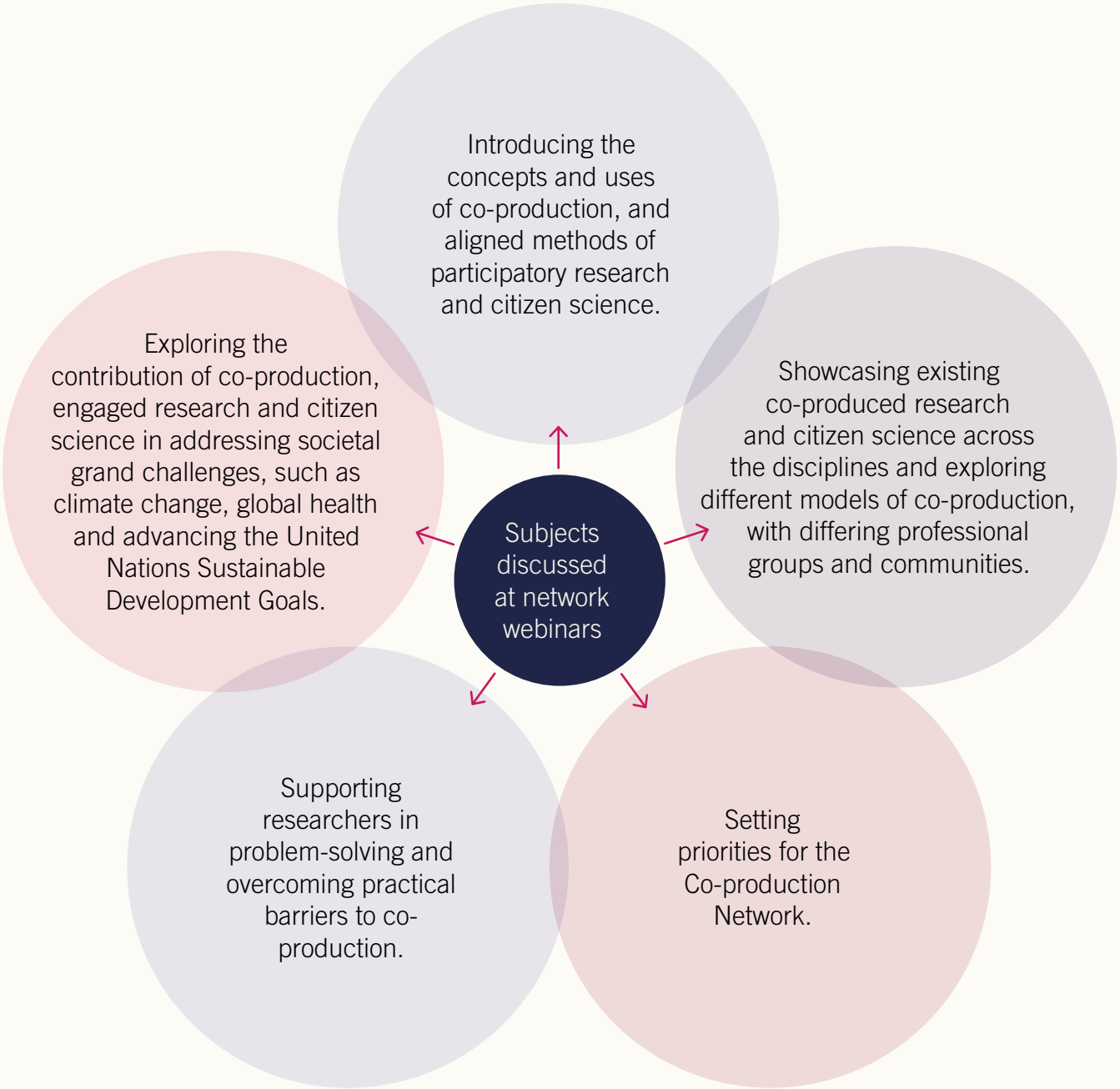
Manifesto for change

The Co-production Network produced a 'Statement for an Institutional Culture of Co-production' which presented the challenges that confront researchers engaged in co-production with diverse partners. It also conveyed tangible learning and recommendations to inform the essential institutional, political and cultural shifts necessary to foster the conditions conducive to embedding of co-production, citizen science and participatory approaches in research.

What does the Co-production Network do?

The network acts to promote the value of co-production as a research methodology. It also provides a platform for researchers at the University of Leeds to learn from one another, share best practice, and work together to create a stronger institutional and sectoral culture for citizen science and participatory research. It does this by addressing the practical barriers to co-production. In promoting this, the network also advocates for change and lowering the institutional barriers to doing co-produced work.

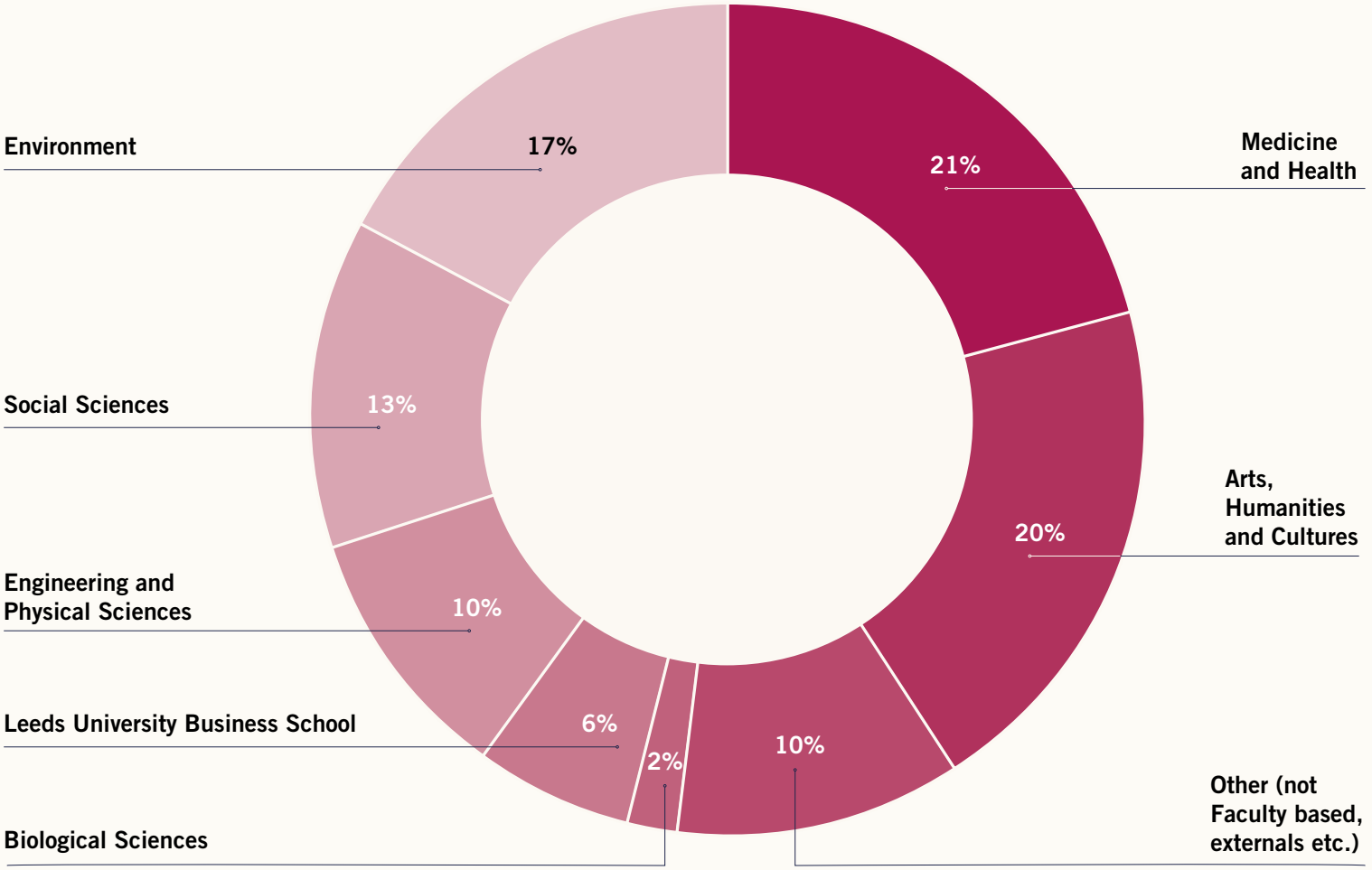
Following its inception in 2019, the network delivered a series of five webinars in 2020: “Engaged Research: Rethinking the Co-production of Knowledge”.



Who is engaged with the network?

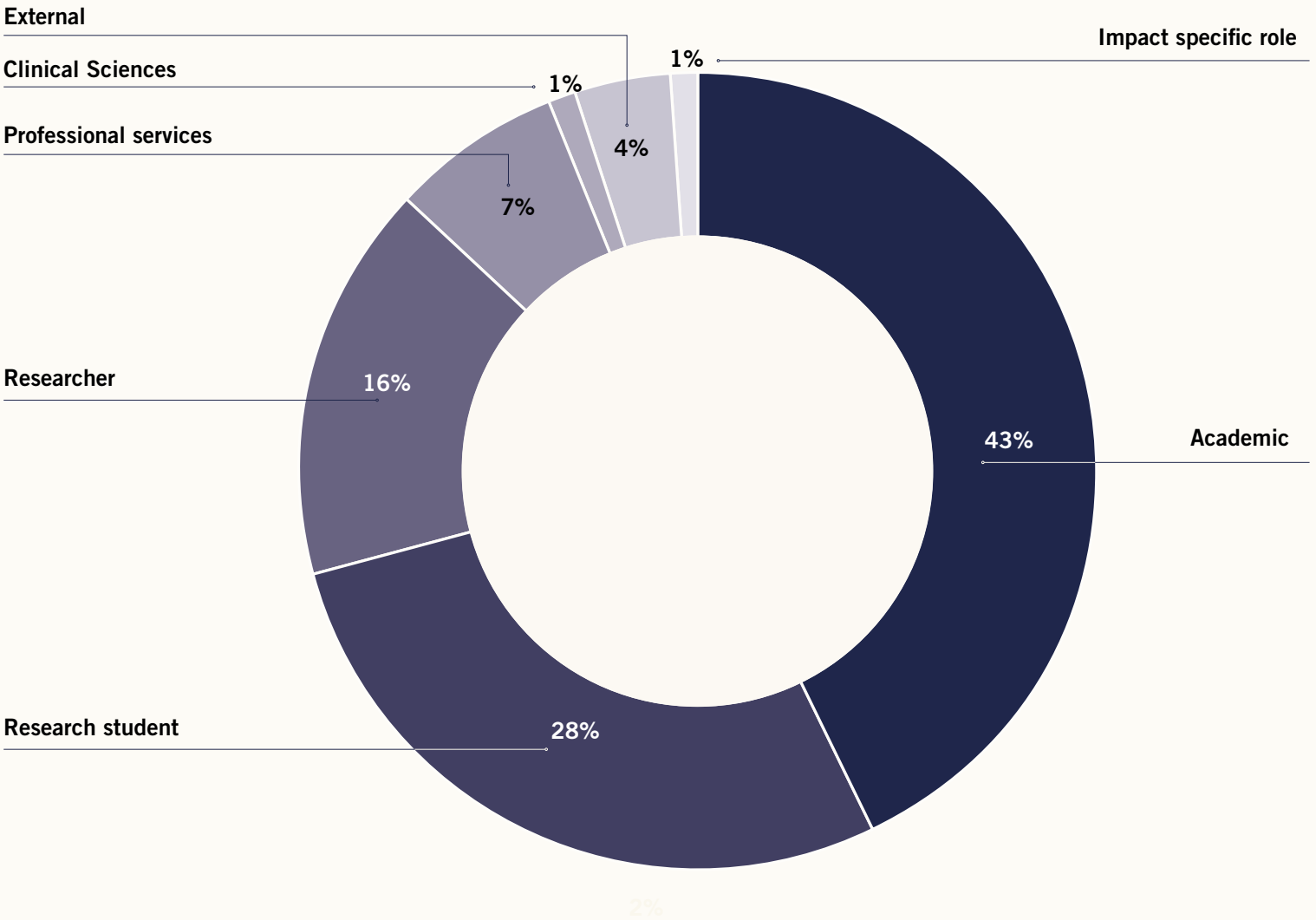
Over 200 people participated in the most recent series of five seminars. The participants comprised a mix of career stages, including research students and early career researchers, a small number of external participants and professional services colleagues. Participants included colleagues from across all faculties.

Faculty participation*



*Due to rounding of figures, the percentages above do not add up to 100%

Attendee type



Adam Crawford

Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice
School of Law

Adam was the previous Director of LSSI and the Co-production Network founder.

Adam's research focuses on urban policing – not just what the police do, but what public sector, voluntary and private organisations do around policing and how they interact.

As the Director of the N8 Policing Research Partnership – a research based collaboration between the N8 Universities and police forces and Offices of Police and Crime Commissioners across the north of England – Adam engaged service providers and practitioners from voluntary sector organisations who confront these issues on a day-to-day basis and have a deep understanding of contemporary problems to involve them in the co-design and co-production of research to complement academic insights. The co-production approach crucially also involved them throughout the research design by thinking through the nature of the problems - how we understand them and how we try to solve them.

Building on from this important work, Adam is the Co-Director of the new ESRC Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre co-hosted by the University of Leeds and University of York. This research centre will expand on this co-production approach by also working with and involving those people with lived experiences as service users and vulnerable groups.

"Co-production highlights the power differentials – and the importance for researchers to be clear about the expectations around what co-production means, which also means being clear about the limitations"

"*This presents some sensitive ethical challenges – especially ot stigmatising those groups even further.*"

Engaging both service providers and service users throughout the research process is crucial to the co-creation of research questions and methodologies. Managing the different values, needs and expectations of diverse groups can be challenging, but also poses many opportunities to enhance service provision and support for vulnerable members of the community.

"*Ultimately, policing is about coercion – the use of coercive powers often against people whose behaviours may for whatever reason be seen as problematic. Co-production highlights the power differentials – and the importance for researchers to be clear about the expectations around what co-production means, which also means being clear about the limitations.*"

Co-production and Participatory Research

What is co-production?

Co-production is a way of approaching the generation of knowledge, a way of addressing a question rather than focusing on the answering of the question itself. Co-production is a dynamic methodology that opens up new research questions in different ways and provokes different answers to those research questions.

There is, however, no set guidelines for co-production - it is a set of principles and could be applied in a number of ways.

Co-production is often held up as a gold standard but it is also possible to do good involvement and engagement within the parameters that you are working – if that's all that can be achieved that is still really good!

What is 'participatory research'?

Participatory research is a necessary theoretical and methodological tool for engaging different narratives and voices, past and present, and also accounting for potential action and change. Participatory research identifies critical thinking as the starting point of research and co-creation, in what is known as the full circle outcome of the research. As a research methodology it enables the co-creation of knowledge and positive partnerships that can lead to improved research designs, enhanced credibility of knowledge generated, and increased community ownership of initiatives.

Co-production can require a different set of tools to 'traditional' research. For example, co-production draws upon visual, verbal and creative methodologies to engage different stakeholders throughout the research process.

Paul Wilson
Lecturer & Researcher
School of Design

Marie-Avril Berthet
PhD Researcher
School of Geography

In this podcast, **Paul Wilson** and **Marie-Avril Berthet** reflect on what co-production and participatory research represents – exploring the opportunities that these approaches offer, the overlap between them and also how they differentiate.

'*Certain narratives can be articulated through participatory research, and we can find ideas around agency and empowerment within those narratives… novel experiences of participation might actually prompt different experiences of how people are telling stories or co-creating stories*' - Paul

Marie-Avril's PhD research used a co-production approach to the design of urban policy in Geneva – reflecting on how co-production enables space for critical self-reflection: '*Co-production is an experience of a practical outcome, but it's also an experience of reflecting upon this neoliberal environment that we live in and to be critical about that*'

Paul and Marie-Avril also explore what we mean by 'participation' and how we engineer participatory spaces within our research approaches: '*How we've re-designed the experience of participation as a valuable site for knowledge, how we critically re-engineer the tools of participation, and how we might need to co-produce participatory tools before we actually start any kind of participatory research with and for communities*' – Paul

"Co-production is also an experience of reflecting upon this neoliberal environment that we live in and to be critical about that"

Marie-Avril Berthet

Sahla Aroussi

Associate Professor Global Security Challenges

School of Politics and International Studies

Visual methodologies like participatory mapping, photovoice, or season calendars and daily schedules challenge the way in which we communicate - giving a voice to people who find it difficult to articulate verbally and supporting different ways of communicating that enable that conversation to happen. This is useful to enable participants to explain or tell you what they want to tell you - without necessarily needing all the right words.

Verbal methodologies like interviews, storytelling and narratives, as well as participatory diaries and focus groups, may help to engage different members of the community on different topics. Such verbal methodologies can enable in-depth accounts of personal experiences and reflections where participants give their story the fullness they desire.

"Art can move our emotions to a point in which we can break some of the boundaries and go and try to do something different to explore something that maybe was hidden or not visible"

Silvia Olvera-Hernandez

Creative or arts-based methodologies like forum theatre and performance, spoken word and poetry, or participatory filmmaking could help in creating safe and fun environments in which to discuss sensitive topics. Visual and creative methodologies can be useful where there is a language barrier or where literacy levels may be low.

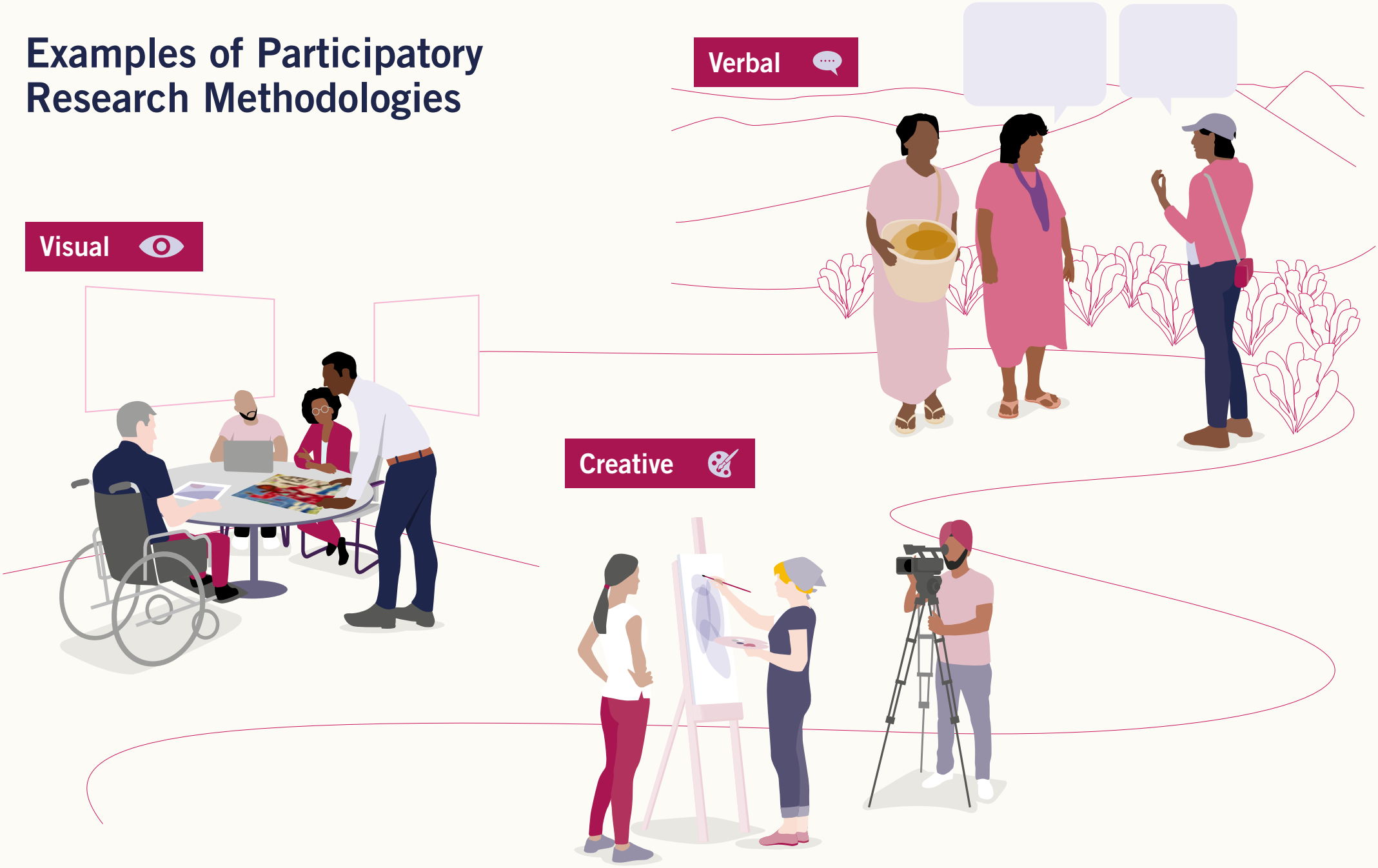
Participatory methods offer all sorts of different tools for doing research that can drive different outcomes and can create different points of engagement with the people that you are working with.

The **'Gender and Resistance to Violent Extremism'** project in Kenya uses body mapping as a form of embodied storytelling to understand how men and women perceive and resist violent extremism in their everyday lives.

"Body mapping uses the body as a research site and engages emotions and bodily experiences – it encourages participants to look at the strength within themselves and hence it is empowering"

Sahla Aroussi

Examples of Participatory Research Methodologies



Jen Dyer

Associate Professor in Sustainability

School of Earth and Environment

Jen conducted her PhD research at the University of Leeds on the impacts of the biodiesel crop, Jatropha curcas, on livelihoods in Malawi.

Within this Jen utilised a variety of creative qualitative and participatory methodologies to engage communities in discussions around their agricultural and livelihood dynamics - including community maps for open discussions around resources and access, transect walks where Jen walked through people's farms talking about agriculture, and seasonal calendars looking at when and what they grow.

'*By using these sorts of methods, you really start building a rapport with somebody and put them at ease very early on.*'

Using this combination of creative methods is not only fun but also means that more and different data emerges, providing a fuller picture of the communities' livelihood and agricultural dynamics.

"Creative research allows me to really produce research that is accessible – lots of different people can input in different ways"

'*It's often the process that's just as important as the outcome.*'

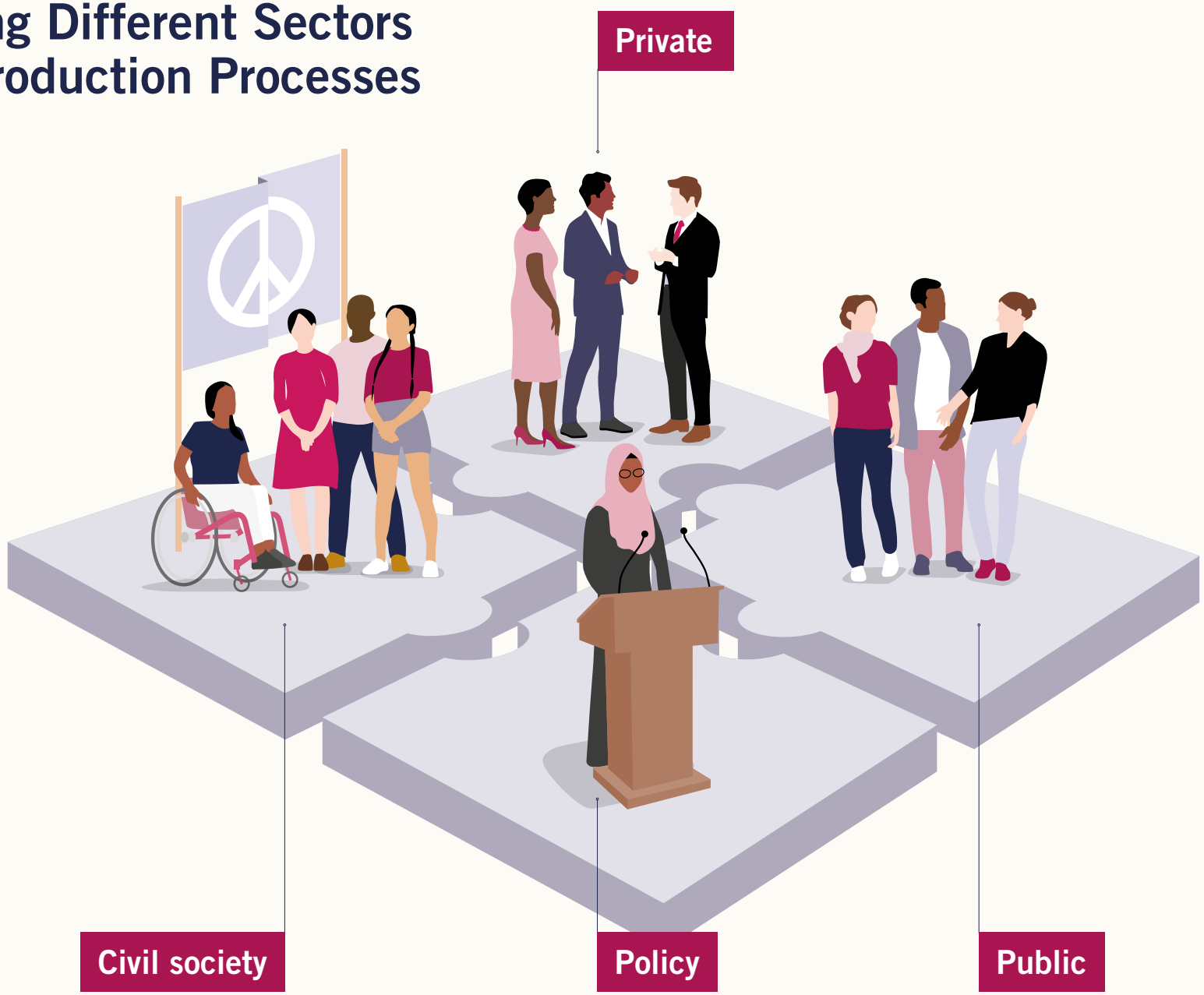
Closer to home, Jen now works on an initiative entitled 'Mixed Ability Sports' with a varied range of stakeholders across Bradford with varied abilities. The co-production approach enables the project to be designed around what is relevant to them, and Jen also incorporates creative participatory methodologies such as timelines and participatory mapping to introduce prompts and interactivity which enables people to think more broadly and outside the box about what you're asking them.

'*Creative research allows me to really produce research that is accessible – lots of different people can input in different ways.*'

These methodologies also enable you as a researcher to validate your data as you go along by the very people that you are researching with.

'*You can often wonder 'Is this working?' But then I think as you do more and more of it…you step back and think 'OK that didn't work. Let's revisit and have another go.*'

Engaging Different Sectors in Co-production Processes



‘Shanty Towns and the City: Colonial Power Relations in Algiers and Casablanca 1919 to 1960’: this project works with communities and local community activists, historians, and journalists in areas that have been stigmatized, and also with people who grew up in the shanty towns in the 1940s and 1950s to explore their memories of the struggle for independence.

“The social value that people can have from being interviewed is quite important for those people who’ve never had the chance to speak about the past - and so they feel more pride in their area through a better understanding of the participation of their families and of their neighbours in the struggle for independences”

Jim House

Barbara Evans is a Professor of Public Health Engineering who works with policymakers to understand how we can articulate to politicians the level of risk associated with not having adequate sanitation.

“The first thing I would say about policymakers is that they’re humans - but their position is what changes their behaviour…it is important to understand the political drivers around them and look for opportunities where their political pressures and your intellectual ideas might align and seize those opportunities”

Barbara Evans

Jo Cutter
Lecturer in Work and Employment Relations
Leeds University Business School

Gabriella Alberti
Associate Professor Work and Employment Relations
Leeds University Business School

The **'Labour mobility in transition: a multi-actor study of the re-regulation of migrant work in 'low-skilled' sectors'** ('LIMITS') project focuses on understanding the responses to the effects of Brexit and COVID-19 in sectors like hospitality, social care, food, manufacturing, and warehousing which have historically been reliant on the provision of migrant labour.

In this podcast, **Jo Cutter**, Lecturer in Work and Employment Relations, and **Gabriella Alberti**, Associate Professor in Work and Employment Relations, reflect on the principles of co-production and why it is important to begin discussions with different stakeholders early on.

"It is iterative because we want to be flexible and responsive to their particular interests…This was formed before the project started…and very much helped cement the working relationships which formed the basis of our collaboration and co-production activities on the ground"

Jo Cutter

Interdisciplinarity

Co-production brings together different disciplines and stakeholders to work together to solve a problem, working in partnership with community members to a set of values that everyone agrees upon.

In an increasingly interconnected world where global challenges such as poverty, inequality and climate change demand global understandings and transdisciplinarity – these networks and community building are vital to create a more holistic approach to tackling these challenges.

Drawing on the experiences of researchers across public health, social sciences, arts and humanities at the University of Leeds, this toolkit seeks to provide a collective voice to the opportunities and challenges that confront researchers engaged in co-production with diverse partners. It also seeks to offer some concrete lessons and tangible learning - as well as recommendations based on these - to inform the essential institutional, political and cultural shifts necessary to foster the conditions conducive to co-production.

"The participants could step into the action and could actually take the conversation to a different area, bring their own ideas and their own visions of the situation"

Julia Martin-Ortega

Martin Zebracki

Associate Professor of Critical Human Geography

School of Geography

The **'Queer Memorials: International Comparative Perspectives on Sexual Diversity and Social Inclusivity (QMem)'** project explores the nature of social engagement with public material monuments that are dedicated to the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

"The project was very strongly underpinned by both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches… we worked in ways that were very complimentary in that we have our own disciplinary perspectives and they come together in a project and augment each other to gain new insights into the subject matter"

Martin Zebracki

Principles of Co-production

1. Equitable

It is important to create and foster equal partnerships and an agreed set of values. Within this researchers need to be mindful of and work to dismantle power imbalances to level the playing field. One way to approach this is to view engaged stakeholders not merely as 'participants', but as 'co-collaborators' or 'knowledge producers'.

2. Flexible

Flexibility is required throughout co-production: in terms of timelines, flexibility enables you to adjust to changes in project workload; flexibility in approaches and expectations enables you to capitalise on different viewpoints; flexibility in relationships enables you to adapt and respond to changing priorities; and flexibility in ethics enables you to adapt to changing timeframes and approaches.

3. Honest

Honesty is essential in co-production when working with different stakeholders. Being honest about your role and how you want that role to look, being clear on your goals, capacity, expectations, and the feasibility of all involved is crucial in fostering productive collaborations. There is a need to be transparent and open-minded in this process to the values and approaches of other stakeholders, and to also be candid through openly sharing the difficulties of the process.

"You must be able to be flexible and adaptable on the spot... which means also accepting your own frustrations with the process and embracing the opportunities"

Julia Martin-Ortega

4. Trust and respect

It is crucial to take the time required to establish trust within working relationships with all stakeholders – from communities to policy-makers. Within this time, it is important to act with humility – be aware you may not know all the answers and be willing to relinquish control in this process to those that do, whilst respecting boundaries.

5. Inclusive

Co-production requires openness and inclusivity processes – ensuring that all stakeholders are engaged throughout the process. This requires that you recognise the plurality of expertise and let different people bring their own independence and thinking to the process. It is important to make sure that they know you will listen to them and take into account what they tell you.

"People tend to work in disciplinary silos... when you think about the practical questions...then you find that people tend to focus on what they share, rather than what their differences are"

Adam Crawford

Co-production Principles

1. Equitable
2. Flexible
3. Honest
4. Trust and respect
5. Inclusive

Principles of Co-production

6. Communication

Continuous relationship building and continuous dialogue means that challenges can be overcome as they come up in the research process. Keeping those relationships going and keeping people on board sometimes requires a lot of diplomacy - researchers are not trained diplomats but end up being intermediaries and this requires both time and skills in facilitation and how to create dialogue.

7. Reciprocity

It is essential to ensure that co-production approaches are mutually beneficial – i.e. everyone has to get something out of it that is tailored to their values and needs. It is therefore crucial to consider what those who are contributing to the process get out of it – and to think beyond traditional research outputs within this to consider what outputs may be best suited.

8. Defining collective agendas

Co-production approaches require all stakeholders to be clear from the start around expectations and goals. It is important to be prepared for divergence here – not everyone's objectives will be the same. However consensus is not always the desired outcome and it is important to embrace differences to find commonalities – focus on shared problem(s) and use these problem(s) to drive the commonality of interest to build a shared goal and objective.

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9. Approaching Co-production

When engaging in co-production it is important to collectively design the research agenda and address power imbalances from the very beginning. Within this process it is important to be conscious of who is driving the project – instigators are often outsiders to the communities involved and this may create tension for doing equitable co-production.

10. Failing

Crucially, sometimes your approach or methodology may not work and you may not get any answers to your research problem. It is important to have the ability to fail and to have the capacity through continuous evaluation and learning to collectively consider a different approach. Take risks and be patient - learn through the process of doing and the process of co-production itself.

"You need to make sure that the research that you are doing is actually co-produced as an idea….the research has to come from a local need, it has to come in collaborations with local participants"

Sahla Aroussi

Co-production Principles

6 Communication
7 Reciprocity
8 Defining collective agendas
9 Approaching Co-production
10 Failing

How to Approach Positionality in Co-production

As a lot of research is funded and led by researchers in the Global North but working within the 'Global South' – this already puts us in a powerful position and therefore negotiating co-production with people who see us as more powerful is something that needs a lot more engagement, before the research is conceived. Engaging in co-production from the very beginning – even before the research is designed – ensures that we start on the same page through having a shared understanding of the goals and objectives. This requires people to be really honest about what they want to bring to and take out of the research – where impact may not be seen through peer-reviewed papers, reciprocity through other forms of knowledge sharing and outputs is essential.

We also need to be careful that we are not imposing our own values on the participants. Ensuring flexibility in the design of research timelines and expectations might shift the boundary of what we initially thought would make relevant research in that context.

When working with a diverse group with different values and needs, it is important to work towards a shared set of problems and to use the problems to drive the commonality of interest and define a collective agenda. Shared problems often bring personal motivations – what drives certain elements of co-production is that people really want to see change from different perspectives, but if you can harness the commonality that motivates the change,even though people may come at that change from different perspectives, then that in itself can be very powerful in moving forward.

Relationship Building

In order to build and foster relationships of trust, respect and openness it is important to be mindful of different stakeholders and what you want your relationship with them to be – and also how you approach that whilst considering power imbalances. Creating equitable and inclusive partnerships through valuing all stakeholders equally and giving them space to be open about their expectations is key to approaching co-production.

Whilst respecting boundaries, it can be important to build really genuine personal relationships with stakeholders so that they know us not just as researchers but as people on whom they can count. This kind of deep relationship building involves investment with people over a long period of time.

Maintaining communication can be a way to overcome some of those challenges. Giving different stakeholders the chance to talk to each other, or just communicating that you are still working on the things that they've told you, shows that you are actively engaged in relationship building and see the importance of sustaining those relationships over time. Managing expectations from the start around the best mode and format of communication is also key. There is no fixed end to co-production relationships – sustainability and ongoing relationship building should be the ideal.

Co-production can be messy and difficult – researchers need to be not just willing to fail, but be willing to learn through the process.

"Without the meaningful part of creating relationships, anything you do is undermined and exploitative"

Mel Flynn

Adriaan van Klinken

Professor of Religion and African Studies

School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science

Adriaan uses participatory methodologies to explore the politics and the role of religion around LGBTQ+ rights in African contexts.

Working with 'The Nature Network' – a community-based self-empowerment organisation of Ugandan LGBTQ+ refugees in Nairobi, Kenya - Adriaan uses life storytelling as an activist method to give marginalised communities who are stigmatised and discriminated against in society the opportunity to share their life and experiences with a broader audience. Through doing so they "humanise themselves in a context where many are systematically dehumanised".

The project, titled "Tales of Sexuality and Faith: The Ugandan LGBT Refugee Life Story Project", was funded by the British Academy and The Leverhulme Trust. Co-producing and facilitating workshops with The Nature Network, Adriaan's work explores how Bible stories could be creatively used to empower and affirm the participants in a context where the Bible is often used against them.

"The fact that their film won was so important and meant so much to them, and was a real affirmation"

"*The Bible became a symbol and a metaphor to reflect their own life experiences, their struggles, but also their hope for the future, their faith in God, their support for each other.*"

Adriaan utilises creative methodologies through asking the participants to re-tell and dramatize Bible stories through community-based theatre in their own contemporary contexts in light of their own experiences.

"*It becomes a story of hope… a therapeutic process.*"

Two short films based on this dramatization entitled 'Jesus and the Guys Charged with Indecency' and 'Daniel in the Homophobic Lions' Den' were screened at the 'Changing the Story' International Film Festival, with the latter winning the Platinum Award to the delight of the community – "*The fact that their film won was so important and meant so much to them, and was a real affirmation*".

Role of the Researcher

What is the role of a researcher in co-production?

Co-production requires academics to make themselves vulnerable, recognise that they are not repositories for knowledge - and that they have to refashion and work in very different ways to access the knowledge and the expertise that lies outside. This often requires them to expose themselves to a certain degree – this is challenging and it is important to be mindful and take time and space to reflect and look after their own wellbeing.

In doing so it is difficult but necessary to question the role of the researcher in co-production, examine and question the perceived authority and if/when it is appropriate for the researcher to exercise authority and power - and when is it not. It is important to view the researcher's role role in co-production through highlighting what they bring to the table – how they contribute to that discussion, and be prepared to relinquish control to others in this process.

"Broadening up that notion of resources helps to change the idea that we as researchers from the UK had the power, had the money, had the resources… the community brought in a whole other range of things that were as essential if not more essential for the projects than the money itself"

Adriaan van Klinken

The ethics of co-production

Obtaining ethical approval is a very important process in academia and it is essential that academics are regulated. Ethics is not there to block – rather it should be viewed as a pause and time to reflect about the implications of the research, the risk to the researcher, and also the risk to the communities and stakeholders with whom the research is engaged.

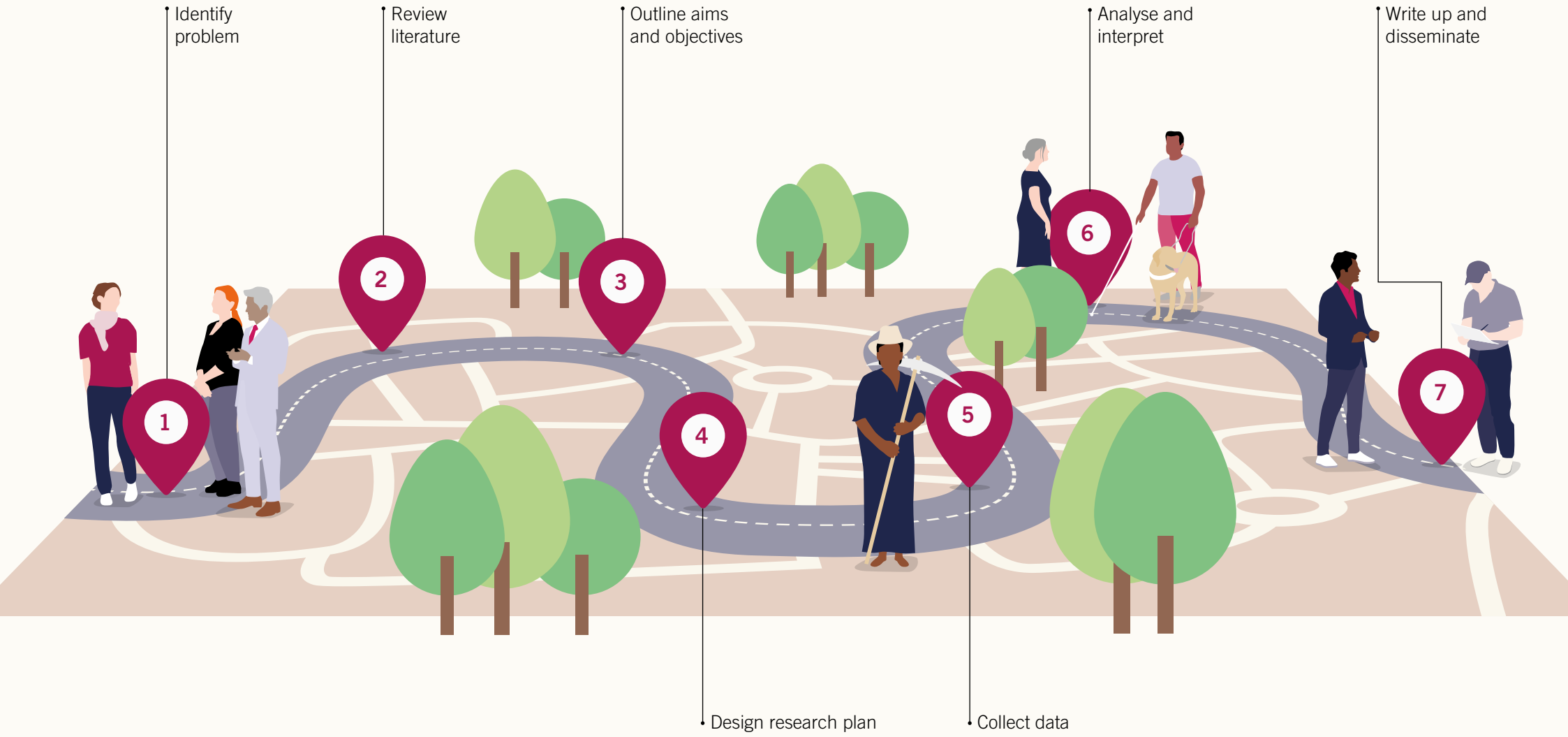
It can sometimes be difficult to put together and obtain ethical clearance when working on dynamic projects with different stakeholders – where evolving ethical dilemmas may raise practical issues. In this case it is best to try to predict as much as possible in the original ethics application, then provide amendments as things change.

This is an ongoing process and it requires researchers to be involved in ethical amendments and ethical review boards.

It is also important to create an environment and working relationships where all those involved in the research feel able to raise ethical problems and are not afraid that they will be rejected.

The objective is not to say 'I have ethics approval' - but to have an ongoing reflection of being a reflective and thoughtful researcher through ensuring that those ethics are part of the process.

Co-production Processes



How To Value and Demonstrate Impact in Co-production

It is important in co-production to agree on the types of outputs with all involved to ensure that all stakeholders get something out of it that is beneficial to them, and to manage expectations around this.

It is also important to avoid pre-conceptions around what a scholarly output is – where non-traditional research outputs may may be just as, or more valuable to those involved in co-production.

In this case it can be difficult to know how to write up findings and what to measure in co-production where it is not always clear how to report on findings. It is also important to question whether we have to 'produce' something – where a key value in co-production is the process itself.

"Research is often better seen as a dynamic and an iterative process"

Winnie Bedigen

Traditional academic outputs

The most notable traditional academic outputs are peer-reviewed journal articles. A great way to recognise and give power to the co-production process in journal articles is through co-authorship. This can be a really valuable way to recognise the contribution of different stakeholders in the research process.

Another important approach to recognising the contribution of all stakeholders in co-production within journal articles is through acknowledgements. Ensure you trumpet your own role but more importantly the role of all collaborators – including members of the community. This can sometimes be difficult in recognising the contribution of different participants where ethical considerations may stipulate anonymisation or use of pseudonyms – in such cases the best approach is to discuss this with participants.

Julia Martin-Ortega
Professor
School of Earth and Environment

Silvia Olvera-Hernandez
PhD Researcher
School of Earth and Environment

The **PerformingChange** project uses forum theatre as a creative participatory methodology to engage with marginalised voices in environmental decision-making in Chiapas, Mexico.

The play was recorded and turned into a video which was presented to government policymakers to discuss the issues in the local community.

"I think this becomes both an output and a very powerful vehicle for keeping the conversation up with these other stakeholders"

Julia Martin-Ortega

Non-Traditional Research Outputs

Academic institutions often value these traditional 'academic outputs' over other more creative outputs – however it is important to consider what kind of outputs are best suited to different contexts and what will be most valuable to different stakeholders. Academics can think creatively and imaginatively around what kind of non-traditional research outputs could come from the co-production process, and particularly from the use of creative and arts-based participatory methodologies.

Amelia DeFalco

Associate Professor
School of English

The **Imagining Posthuman Care** project worked with the Thackray Museum of Medicine in Leeds to host an exhibition called 'Can Robots Care?'

Dissemination of Research

When it comes to the dissemination stage of research findings and outputs, there are numerous ways to give credit to the co-production process through engaging different stakeholders in diverse ways. The type of dissemination activity should be tailored to the needs and values of these stakeholders.

One approach is the dissemination of research findings through presentations – be these in international conferences or institutional seminars. One way to give credit to the coproduction research process and to those involved in the research is to invite and support different stakeholders or collaborators to attend and/or to present.

Other public engagement activities, such as exhibitions, community productions and festivals, are other important forums through which research findings may be shared with the public and in which different stakeholders can be engaged.

Policy events, workshops, and press releases can be important dissemination activities through which to engage policymakers and promote policy-relevant research outputs.

"The participatory research was really at the stage of dissemination when we launched the exhibition, we had a fairly large event where we had quite a few robots onsite and also a robot designer…there's been a lot of opportunities connected to the exhibition for people to not just learn about the robots from text and images, but by interacting with the robots"

Amelia DeFalco

Ingrid Arotoma

PhD Student

School of Earth and Environment

Ingrid's PhD explores the impacts of climate change on food security and Indigenous health in Peru.

Living in Chanchamayo Province on the Junín Region in central Peru, Ingrid collaborates with 'OMIAASEC' ('Organización de Mujeres Indígenas Amazónicas Ashaninka de la Selva Central') - a non-profit organisation based in Chanchamayo who work with Amazonian Indigenous Women of the Central Jungle.

'*You are not just researching people but you are researching with them.*'

Using **participatory filmmaking**, Ingrid works with nine girls (15-25 years old) from different Indigenous communities from the Ashaninka people to learn about the climate and food security dynamics in their villages from the past to the present, and what will happen in the future considering climatic variations. Ingrid co-produces the research design with the girls, and also teaches them how to use the filming equipment.

'*Sometimes what you are interested in is not what they are interested in.*'

Each of the nine girls then took the cameras back to their own communities to explore this topic from the perspectives of community members – including elders. Coming back together after six months to share their footage from the different communities meant there was a vast amount of footage. Together they produced a storyline for each community from which Ingrid edited the videos and reviewed them with the girls so they were also involved in the outputs.

"You are not just researching people but you are researching with them."

Through participatory processes, Ingrid aims to ensure that the research and knowledge she is co-producing with the communities will not only lead to peer-reviewed journal articles but, more importantly, will consider what the benefits will be to them for their participation.

'*To benefit them, you first need time to try to let them understand what you want to do and for you to understand what you could also do for them.*'

In addition to teaching the communities how to use the cameras, Ingrid will also leave the filming equipment with them so that they can increase their presence on social media and attract more funding:

'*There is a need for me to give back what I am learning – maybe sometimes it could be resources like the cameras, sometimes it could be knowledge.*'

Opportunities that Co-production Offers

Gehan Selim
Professor of Architecture
School of Civil Engineering

'The Living Museum of Umm Qais' project works with the local community to enhance the local tourism economy and preserve the site's unique cultural heritage.

Working with local community and heritage professionals in Jordan, the project uses digital storytelling to gather original and authentic stories of the site.

"Co-production methodologies have many added values for participatory work undertaken in various contexts to capture complex and sensory experiences, enabling the expression of emotion and revealing the untold narratives"

Gehan Selim

Gives voice and choice

In equal partnerships, co-production and participatory approaches recognise the expertise of all stakeholders. Providing a safe space to stakeholders and communities who are directly impacted by societal issues to voice their opinions and experiences – particularly in cases where such people may have been denied this opportunity – can be an empowering act.

Buy-in from affected communities and stakeholders

When designing a research project around a particular research gap or societal issue, it is important to ensure that those who are directly affected by this issue in their day-to-day lives are included in how that problem is understood and approached. Including these affected populations in the research process helps to ensure buy-in and that they are actively engaged in how that problem is managed.

Better research outcomes

Ensuring that the values and needs of different stakeholders are considered and included in the research design often leads to better research outcomes overall. People who face different issues in their day-to-day lives often have a much clearer understanding of how that problem should be approached than academics do – and it is vital that they are given the space to voice their preferences.

Offers more freedom in research

Co-production and participatory research approaches often enable researchers to conduct more creative and innovative work – particularly when considering the potential benefits of non-traditional outputs.

Reduces extractive nature of 'research'

Through engaging different sectors of society in the research process, co-production helps to reduce the risk of 'helicopter' or 'parachute science' – where researchers from wealthier countries go to a 'developing county' to collect data and return to publish the results of their analysis with little to no involvement of local researchers and the affected communities.

Actively working to not only give credit to local researchers and affected communities, but also to actively engage them in the research design – how problems are understood and approached – is vital to reduce the harmful extractive nature of knowledge production.

Recognises and values different forms of knowledge

The open and inclusive nature of co-production and participatory research practice, if done well, values the experiences and knowledge of all stakeholders equally. This is vital to challenge the hierarchies of knowledge and evidence, and to acknowledge the individual expertise of different groups.

"You normally tend to see the academic researcher who recruits participants as being the one in the powerful position. But actually this was not the case…the researcher needs to relinquish control and let things go and intervene, if needed."

Elisabetta Adami

Winnie Bedigen
Teaching Fellow
School of Politics and International Studies

Lata Narayanaswamy
Associate Professor in the Politics of Global Development
School of Politics and International Studies

In this podcast, **Winnie Bedigen** and **Lata Narayanaswamy** reflect on the opportunities that co-production approaches offer to decolonisation through recognising the plurality of knowledge systems.

Helps to break down power hierarchies (if done well)

By valuing different forms of knowledge and experience, co-production and participatory research approaches help to break down power hierarchies in traditional research practice. Power imbalances can go either way – sometimes the power is not with you as the researcher. Acknowledging these imbalances is a first step, and actively working to ensure that less powerful participants are given a safe space to voice their opinions ensures that their individual knowledge and experiences and reflected in the research design.

Decolonisation

Co-production and participatory research practices are therefore vital in efforts to decolonise research through problematising how knowledge is produced and valued – and by whom.

Questioning who gets to decide how problems are understood and approached in research means that academics need to reflect more carefully on whose ideas count and how these ideas and knowledges become validated and taken up in global-level discourses.

"When you look at decolonising - it is not just about learning, it's about unlearning matters as well. But unlearning them would mean that we have to have the knowledge, the ideas of what actually exists on the other side"

Winnie Bedigen

When it comes to positionality, for researchers from the Global North, it is really important to ensure that the research agendas are led by the needs and identified priorities of 'Global South' partners, showing that we need to move past colonial exclusionary terms like project 'beneficiaries' and work towards knowledge co-producers, co-creators, co-researchers.

Barriers and Challenges in Implementing Co-production

Gives voice and choice

Claims of seamless co-production should be regarded with suspicion – it is rarely straightforward! Challenges will be diverse and contextual depending on the research location and which stakeholders are involved, but there are some overarching challenges and lessons to be learned.

It takes time

Establishing trust and healthy working relationships can take time. This can be hard for academics – especially when working to limited timeframes imposed through funding constraints. However, the more time and effort you put into establishing trust and respect, the more fruitful and collaborative your relationships will be – and ultimately will lead to increased buy-in and better research outcomes overall.

Reaching 'hard to reach' parts of the community

When working in remote areas or with stakeholders who control or limit the access to other participants, it can be challenging to reach these people to give them the space and voice to participate in the research process. In such cases it can be useful to work with gatekeepers or established people with social capital and networks who can help to connect you to so-called 'hard to reach' parts of the community. For PhD students or early career researchers, it can be beneficial to put in the time and effort to build those networks, even when it might not always be obvious what you are going to get back in return.

Defining a collective agenda

Each partner and stakeholder will bring a different set of interests and values. It can be difficult to work with people who are not in agreement with one another and is important to note that consensus might never happen – however in such cases the researcher should work to find the commonalities and shared interests between all participants to collectively define the research agenda.

"Co-production can be messy and difficult – but ultimately very rewarding"

Adam Crawford

Acknowledging power

Before we can work towards dismantling unequal power relations, even the act of acknowledging hidden power structures can be difficult - don't assume that power sits in obvious places. Opening up safe spaces for dialogue for all participants is one step towards fostering inclusive dialogue around power and the many overt and covert forms this takes.

Navigating positionality

As a researcher it is important to reflect on what our role and purpose is and what space we might be taking up in that process. We cannot presume that our engagement is entirely unproblematic or even welcome, even if we choose to take a participatory approach. It can be difficult but necessary to ask ourselves how we can practice 'do no harm' and if there are instances

when the best approach may be to actually take a step back and realise this is not our place.

Equally, it is important to question what we mean by 'participation' and how we practice this to avoid the risk of tokenism and symbolic efforts to be inclusive to members of minority or discriminated groups. Fostering truly respectful and inclusive collaborations is key to navigating positionality and tokenism to limit the extractive nature of traditional research practice.

Difficulties of navigating co-production during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has, and continues to, impose challenges and restrictions on how we approach research. Social distancing restrictions and the inability to travel, limit face to face contact which has knock-on effects for the types of participatory methodologies that are possible.

COVID-19 has thrown into sharp relief some of the societal issues that we have to deal with and in other ways offers new opportunities for engagement – where the new digital age has opened up potential for new forms of inclusion and avenues for collaboration and in some cases created a slightly more level playing field. However shifting research and collaborations online can also lead to increased exclusion and the potential to deepen further inequalities which we already see within society – particularly when it comes to resource access.

One key lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic is to ensure flexibility in planning your research approach – building in extra time and contingency plans in case your original approach or methodologies do not work is crucial.

Elisabetta Adami

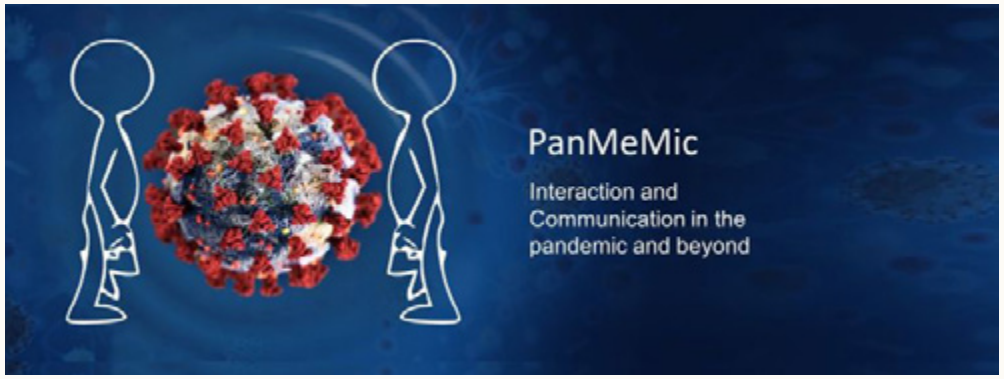
Associate Professor in Multimodal Communication

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

The **PanMeMic** project used various social media platforms to gather people from all across the world to understand the changes in interaction and communication from the COVID- 19 pandemic.

Data protection and engaging information online

In this increasingly digital world, it can be challenging to ensure the protection of information online. Safeguarding



– particularly with children and other groups who are deemed vulnerable – to prevent harm and to tackle issues around consent and authority can be complex when working online.

For example, OneDrive isn't always suitable when working across different communities. Conversations with people in charge of these systems institutionally can be tricky because they don't necessarily understand what we are trying to achieve, why we are trying to achieve it or the ways in which we want to work with people. Engaging in open and honest conversations from the onset regarding data management practices is key.

Social media

Social media is a test case of the limits of how far we are prepared to do co-production online. We cannot control what opinions people will post, and we often have limited ability to intervene in cases of conflict. When things take off on social media they can take on a life of their own, and to really relinquish some of that control is a big challenge.

There is also often an assumption that social media democratises and extends participation in many important ways. However social media is itself differentiated by income – where digital poverty and intergenerational and regional differences can limit the extent to which certain groups can participate.

Recommendations for Enabling and Improving Co-production

Institutional barriers

Co-production is an organic process which doesn't necessarily align with the ways in which universities like to organise research or the ways in which funding councils like to fund research. The system doesn't necessarily reward co-production research in the same ways it does other types of research. In addition, we as researchers don't necessarily reward those that we engage with in ways that we might want to or should do. There is a tension with co-production research that involves participants in the community who may not be paid for their time, for example. There is a whole system of hidden power structures and (lack of) reward systems that need to be considered and challenged in co-production work. Working within these institutional barriers can be difficult – but there are some lessons we can take forward in our approaches. In addition to the best practice and practical solutions described above, there are some recommendations we can take to our institutions, partners, and funding bodies in order to foster a more enabling environment to facilitate successful co-production.

Recommendations for higher education institutions

The first step for academic institutions is to recognise that they are not the centre of knowledge - and to see themselves more as knowledge enablers. To position universities as outward looking and inclusive organisations, who are creative and curious in their approach to research, would help to foster collaborations across diverse sectors to tackle societal issues.

Universities need to recognise and value the time is takes for

co-production, the time needed for relationship building and establishing trust. This could be improved by recognition within staff workload and in staff development, with seed funding provided to develop relationships with external partners.

Importantly, academic institutions need a shift in how they perceive impact by recognising the value of diverse research outputs. Moving beyond the **Research Excellence Framework (REF)** and an emphasis on peer-reviewed academic journals, many of which are often kept behind unnecessary paywalls, is a step towards considering how we may offer something in return to our collaborators via our research outputs. Focusing on the social consequences of research and on the process of co-production itself rather than impact would position academic institutions as a global player.

In order to enable peer-reviewed papers to be accessible it is important to ensure open access for all outputs.

For PhD students – this could involve a move away from the constraints of a traditional thesis, to allow for more creative and innovative research outputs.

"The research was only possible through the partnership with Dr. Fathima, she is a local and has knowledge of the communities and their experiences, keeps the project going and uses the findings and builds on them afterwards"

Sahla Aroussi

Recommendations for non-academic organisations:

In order to build fruitful collaborations between academic and non-academic organisations, co-production approaches must foster a supportive environment in which such organisations can be confident in their ideas and knowledge, and that expectations around values, roles and outputs are clearly agreed upon from the start.

Think about what the research element of a project will bring to your work. Invest in and provide the necessary time and resources to engage with researchers in knowledge co-production partnerships and sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships, including through training and skills development.

Recommendations for research funders and the Government:

Fostering a more enabling environment for co-production necessitates a change to funding systems to enable co-production from the very start of research conceptualisation and design, and to support innovative and experimental approaches. Examining the potential to fund partnerships, including initial partnership building and subsequent maintenance through, for example, seminar programmes, strategic networks and more flexible funding structures, would be a step towards this.

This could be done by supporting the development of capacity and training in reflective learning, translation, facilitation and participatory engagement.

“If we define impact as a making a change in other people’s lives… impact is through these interactions among people. We inevitably change and we inevitably learn”

Elisabetta Adami

Research funders have an important role to play in how impact and value is recognised in academia. In order to accommodate and value co-production in metrics like REF, the value of non-traditional research outputs and the benefits that these offer to different stakeholders must be recognised.

Ensuring that research outputs are accessible by all through funding open access is critical to maintaining inclusive and equal partnerships.

One potential avenue to foster interdisciplinary co-production would be to have challenge led research councils and funders. Creating the infrastructure necessary to support changes in practice and that all external partners – be they small non-governmental organisations or policy-makers – are supported to remain engaged with research projects is also crucial in this process.

To value the co-production research process – and the co-understanding and co-taking of risks - is an outcome in and of itself. Shared understanding based on stakeholder experience and involvement in the research process, leading to new questions and new understanding of problems, can be a valid outcome with significant potential to lead to an increased ability to address complex real-world issues.

Building Your Network at the University of Leeds

Research excellence is enriched by bringing together disciplines, professions and people to solve real world problems, ensuring that high quality research informs societal change. The case studies represented throughout this toolkit include academics from a range of research institutes and schools across the University of Leeds.

Academics have much to learn from each other – where sharing experiences, challenges and solutions across diverse disciplines and fostering your own network of people – academics and non-academics – is an important step in facilitating co-production.

The **Leeds Social Sciences Institute** helps to foster relationships and interdisciplinary research collaborations to maximise the impact of social science research and enhance the skills of the next generation of researchers.

Building Your Network at the University of Leeds

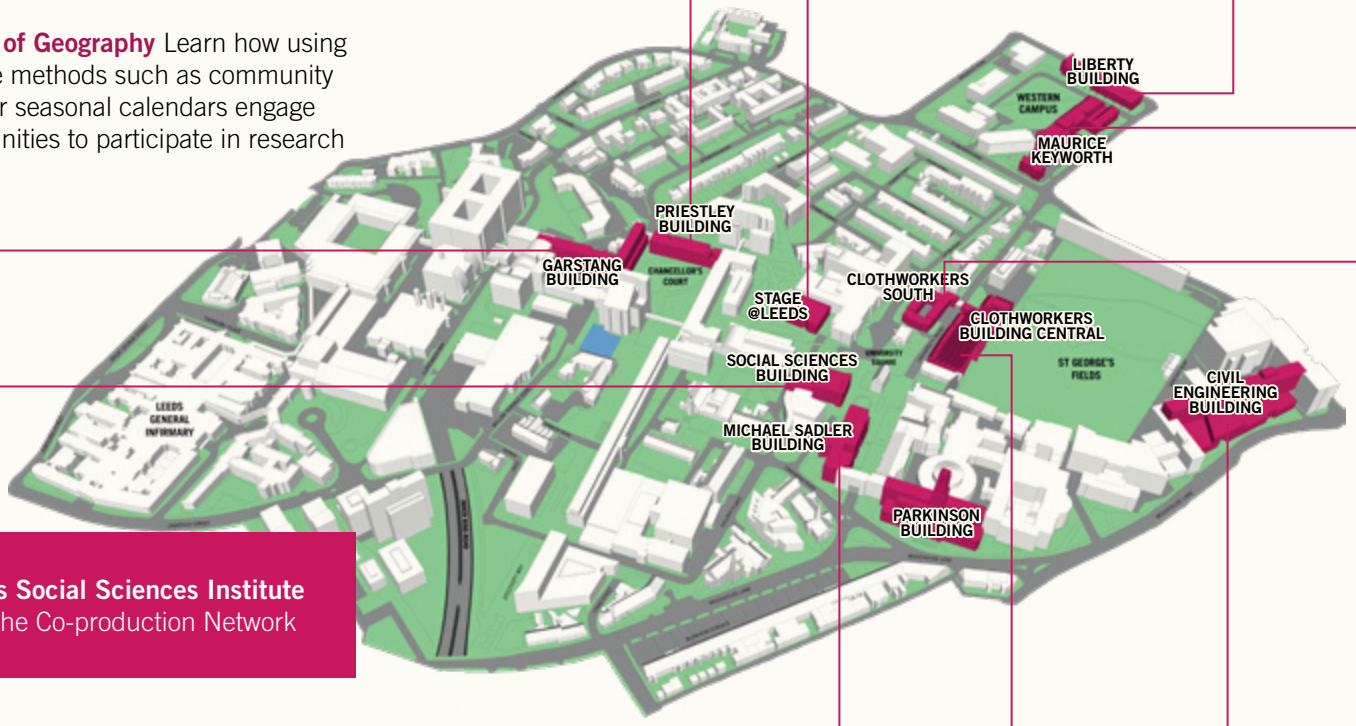
School of Earth and Environment
Learn how we can integrate participatory approaches into research about environmental decision-making and policy

School of Performance and Cultural Industries Learn about arts-based methodologies like forum theatre and participatory filmmaking

School of Law Learn about how modern policing interacts with service providers and voluntary sector organisations to help vulnerable people

School of Geography Learn how using creative methods such as community maps or seasonal calendars engage communities to participate in research

Leeds University Business School
Learn about how we can engage local organisations to foster social dialogue on migration in the post-Brexit work environment



Leeds Social Sciences Institute
Join the Co-production Network

Leeds Arts and Humanities Research Institute
Learn about interdisciplinary research across and beyond the arts and humanities

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies Learn about how we can engage communities in our research to co-produce understanding of different cultures

School of Design Learn how working with design industry partners results in gaining relevant, practical experience to solve real-world design problems

School of Civil Engineering Learn about how we use digital technologies to preserve cultural heritage and co-produce knowledge with communities

Mel Flynn
PhD Researcher
School of Earth and Environment

Ingrid Arotoma
PhD Researcher
School of Earth and Environment

In this podcast, **Mel Flynn** and **Ingrid Arotoma** discuss early career researcher perspectives on co-production and participatory research practice.

Engaging in co-production and participatory research practice within your PhD studies can be challenging: '*Considering how a PhD usually works, having a situation where the first thing you do is set out that somebody else is going to be in charge of the process is kind of intimidating and terrifying…but it's about collaboration and learning and working together jointly on something*' (Mel)

PhDs allow you as an early career researcher to be very focused on a topic and critically reflect on your approach: '*I feel like there is more room to grow in your research*' (Ingrid)

Both working in Indigenous contexts, Mel and Ingrid use participatory methodologies to break down the hierarchies of knowledge and experience: '*It give them the freedom to express themselves… They focused on the things that were most important for them*' (Ingrid)

Being part of a broader discussion on what is seen as the norm in PhD research around impact, outputs and ethics can lead to difficult conversations, but also opens the space for critical reflection: '*Frustrating, creative and uncomfortable…there is a lot of red tape to go through but it's forced me to get creative in how I work and in what is considered research*' (Mel)

Next Steps

Approaching co-production and participatory research practice with limited experience in these approaches can be daunting, but also offers a range of opportunities to be imaginative and innovative in your research approach.

As a researcher new to co-production approaches, it can be hard to know where to start

This toolkit can act as a key resource in building your academic network at the University of Leeds. Through the various integrated case studies, you can learn about a range of novel interdisciplinary and cross-institutional research projects and collaborations, the creative participatory methodologies they use, and the inspired research outputs and how these are used to foster change.

Reaching out to academics whose research or approach interests you is an important first step in building interdisciplinary collaborations and expanding networks. These case studies can act as a starting point for you to ask questions: What was your experience of using this method? Do you think it would work in this context? How can I engage these communities in my research?

Co-production approaches may pose more questions than they answer, but as researchers it is our role to further our understanding, broaden our approaches, and seek creative and innovative solutions to real world challenges.

Outlining the key principles necessary in co-production approaches and offering solutions to these challenges based on case study examples, we hope that that this toolkit provides you with the tools to engage with and adopt these practices within your own research fields.

Co-production Research Toolkit

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For general enquiries, contact **lssi@leeds.ac.uk**

Some of the key information in this brochure remains subject to confirmation. Please check for the latest information using the websites and other resources referred to before making any decisions.

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