CARN

Collaborative Action Research Network

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Research in the Real World: Reaching out to people and communities

Conference Information

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26th – 28th October 2023

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Collaborative Action Research Network

Table of Contents

CARN 2023: Welcome from the CARN Coordinating Group.

Mary McAteer

In October 2023, the CARN Coordinating group hosted the annual conference in the Friends Meeting House, Manchester, UK.

Our conference theme "***Research in the Real World: Reaching out to people and communities***" reflected CARN's aim to "encourage and support Action Research projects (personal, local, national and international), accessible accounts of Action Research projects, and contributions to the theory and methodology of Action Research."

We were joined by 120 people from 22 countries, sharing and discussing real world research, and the ways in which, as action researchers, we attempt to improve our lives and those of others, and the conditions in which we live them. This bulletin comprises our three Keynote Addresses, and eleven conference papers.

The first section is made up of the three keynotes provocations, each one challenging us to understand and do action research in more thoughtful ways.

Franz Rauch, in discussing Education for Sustainable Development, reminds us that pedagogical work must exist within a critical and transformational space. As a political pedagogy, it works within and outside formal educational processes. It challenges us to reflect and learn as professionals, and more importantly, to respond to these reflections and learnings.

Tina Cook brings us disruption, mess and humility as elesential elements of PAR, and through this, offers the provocation that in PAR, there can be no gain without pain. Differentiating between research with participatory methods, and PAR, she outlines the epistemic democracy of critical dialogue and the humility required by the researcher to allow other knowledged to emerge, and be treated equally.

David Coghlan explores the 'sweet spot' for action research. Premised on the notion that action research is founded on relationship, and drawing on Schein's theory, he posits 'Level Two' relationsips (ones of openness and trust), as providing the best foundation for action research activities and practices.

The next section of the Bulletin presents 11 accounts of action research in a range of contexts and geographical locations. While different in scope and focus, they all challenge us to ask questions of ourselves, our practices, and our contexts, and our choices of what is published and how and where. The range of spaces and places in which these reports is located is a clear testament to the 'real world'-ness of action research, and its potential to reach and give voice to people in all walks of life. Of particular interest in this section is the presentation of a Zine, by Steve Kroeger and colleagues. We are delighted to include this highly visual presentation of their work.

Acknowledgements

Finally, no conference is organised without the help and support of many hands! So, a few expressions of thanks and appreciation are in order!

We are grateful to all the members of the CARN CG who have worked for the past year, usually in the background, checking proposals and ensuring that arrangements were in place for scheduling, support for new attendees, catering, providing a social programme, organizing gifts and cards and much more besides. We also thank Cathie Pearce, former lead of the CG for her willing help also and Tina Cook for providing wonderful musical accompaniament at the reception evening. There is also of course the 'last minute' work of setting up the venue, greeting participants, updating information and generally seeing that things run smoothly on the day. Friendly faces at reception help put new visitors at ease, and Fi and Keira did great work in this respect and we are very grateful for their help.

All of this was supported by the tireless work of Charmian, who kept us all on our toes, and undertook the masses of administration that organizing an international conference demands. From answering emails, to keeping records, organising venues and catering, liaising with participants, and generally being everyone's first port of call, Charmian was on top of it all. On behalf of us all, I offer a warm vote of thanks.

However, all the background work, and the 'last minute' venue work is only made possible and worthwhile by the participants. So, we thank you all wholeheartedly for your willingness to participate and engage, and to those who have allowed us to share some of their work in this Bulletin, we offer a very special thanks!

Keynote Provocations

Action Research for a Sustainable Future? Some reflections and critical questions on education, transformation and Action Research:

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Climate change, scarcity of natural resources, destruction of livelihoods and the increase in migration movements and armed conflicts are consequences of a wasteful culture of 25 percent of people at the expense of 75 percent of the world's population. Ways to deal differently with nature and people are sought.

Like human rights, sustainable development may be regarded as a “regulative idea”, which inspires social learning and shaping processes. The notion of a regulative idea is derived from the German philosopher Immanuel Kant and may be understood as an epistemological construct. Kant (1787/1956, p.123) writes: “In this way, the idea is nothing but a heuristic and non-ostensive notion and indicates not how an object is constructed, but how we, guided by it can explore how the objects of our experience are made up and linked to one another”[1]. Regulative ideas thus help us to organise our knowledge and to link it systematically with normative elements. Regulative ideas can also be understood as “pre-concepts” (Dewey 2011) without which no reasonable question can be asked, and no problem identified. Therefore, uncertainty is a constituent element of this regulative idea and allows us to reach consensus in an ongoing process of negotiations (Berger & Luckmann 2005). In terms of sustainability, this implies that the contradictions, moral dilemmas and conflicting targets inherent in a “regulative idea” need to be constantly re-negotiated in a process of discourse between participants in each and every concrete situation. These negotiation processes implie a great challenge but also have considerable potential to enhance learning and innovative developments in education. The theses is, that such processes offer a fertile ground for Action Research.

Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) or Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for transformative learning correspond with the principles of action research. The concepts define a reflexive shaping of society as a target perspective. Knowledge, development, and empowerment are three central categories to which both action research and ESE/ESD refer. The central reference category for both can be seen in a concept of learning and education that unfolds in an autonomous, networked, and research reflective confrontation with the world (Feldmann, Altrichter, Posch & Somekh 2018; Rauch, Steiner & Kurz 2021).

The interdisciplinary nature as well as the present and future relevance of the sustainability debate - with all its inherent dilemmas, uncertainties and confusions - may constitute fertile ground for educational innovation and action research as well. It is of utmost importance to address the challenge of the vast complexity which results from sustainability issues and related

[1] The German quote was translated by the authors of this article.

uncertainties in order to retain a capacity for action without lapsing into simplistic dogmas. While on the one hand sustainability issues are used as a vehicle for emancipatory education (Hentig 1986), they are also meant to trigger concrete sustainable social development processes. This implies a great challenge but also considerable potentials (Rauch 2018).

The phenomenon for example of climate change is full of uncertainties in terms of knowledge and information, adequate actions and relevant societal developments. In the climate-change debate, ”resilience“ and ”adaptability“ are discussed as characteristics of systems and their ability to deal with uncertainties. On the other hand, resilience is also a psychological and pedagogical concept which describes the ability to deal with, adapt to, and critically reflect upon uncertain situations (Nelson 2011). Therefore, one goal of educational processes dealing with climate change and other grand challenges is to support people in becoming more resilient so that they can handle uncertain situations in a productive way.

With regard to sustainable development, education might mean treating questions in concrete fields of action (like climate change) regarding how the future can be organised in a sustainable way. This includes detailed observation, analysis, assessment and organisation of a concrete situation in terms of creative and cooperative processes. Reflected action competence – and not blind action or unreflected patterns of action – is a main objective of learning (Aebli 1980). Ecological, social, economic, political and cultural dimensions can be starting points (Rauch 2016).

Given the uncertainty of what adequate action in complex situations should be and the general precariousness of value conceptions, there is a need to reflect on one’s actions and to nurture an ability and readiness to further develop one’s actions in response to the outcome of the reflection process, as well as to justify such needs against personal goals, vis-à-vis clients and entrant teachers. Competent, professional action in complex situations hence requires concomitant learning and reflection processes as a sine qua non (Bourdieu et al. 1979). Inversely, professional learning requires the experience of acting in complex practical situations. From this angle, professional action and professional learning coincide in one stream of action. While the emphasis of specific actions may be graduated, they are not different actions per se. As professional learning happens in practical situations, which in turn is seen to require reflection and further development, knowledge and skill development go hand in hand with practical situational development (Dewey 1938).

ESE/ESD can be described as a political pedagogy. It is a concept that tries to provide pedagogical answers to major societal questions. As with all political pedagogies, there is a fundamental contradiction between openness as a pedagogical claim and norm orientation as a political claim. This contradiction can only be dealt with again and again by means of participation that is as broad as possible.

The work of educators cannot be limited to pedagogical work in the narrower sense; it must also reflect on the objectives and subjective prerequisites of the work of educators and also consider the goals that go beyond education. This means scrutinising the existing education system, and consequently also working with all educational initiatives outside the system, as these often provide innovations; in other words, working from the niches, but not settling in these niches. It

also means reflecting critically on oneself as an educator and being aware of the need to “transform” oneself; and finally, it means contacting and exchanging with political movements that are working towards the goal of socio-ecological transformation (Austrian Commission for UNESCO 2024).

A number of critical questions could be posed regarding ESD and other political pedagogies based on the pedagogical, educational, and political reflections. They can serve as a yardstick for their transformative quality (Wintersteiner, Glettler, Grobauer, Peterlini, Rauch & Steiner 2023):

(1) Are learning and education developed exclusively on the basis of normative guidelines or is learning understood as learners' process that is accompanied by pedagogy?

(2) Are educators making themselves aware of and transparent about the ambivalence between the normative approaches which are inherent, and thus unavoidable, in the education system and the openness of learning and educational processes to results (both as an ideal and as a reality)? Is this critically reflected upon, and does this transform teaching itself?

(3) Does the development of learning and education in its experiential character involve the understanding of knowledge and educational opportunities that are as de-hierarchised and participatory as possible, in which people can relate to their concrete living conditions and their effects?

(4) Is the link between transformative learning and learning for a socio-ecological transformation made conceptually explicit and maintained in practice?

(5) Is one's own pedagogical concept, be it ESD or another concept, understood as a developing concept that is open to new scientific findings, critical objections, and postcolonial and critical arguments vis-à-vis Western pedagogy, which thus constantly grows in complexity, clarity, and concreteness?

(6) Is the connection between the specific pedagogical approach and the overall context of all transformative pedagogies consciously perceived and practically established?

(7) Does the respective pedagogy take a reflective and critical standpoint towards the structural preconditions of its own work?

(8) Does the respective pedagogical approach also see itself as transformative with regard to the attitudes and practices of its pedagogues?

(9) Are both the catalogue of goals and the respective didactic methods geared towards emancipation and agency—in other words, towards the prerequisites that enable transformative learning to take place?

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Positioning mess, disruption and humility in PAR: no gain without pain?

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I was delighted and honoured to be invited to offer a provocation to those gathered for the 2023 CARN Conference in Manchester, UK. What fun to be able to offer my thoughts on how participatory action research (PAR) works in the field.

I am now in the process of learning to retire, and this provocation is a thank you to those who have inspired me over the years and who have taken some very bumpy action research (AR) and PAR journeys with me over the years. In particular I want to thank a group of men who resided in a medium secure unit for men with learning difficulties, mental health issues and forensic behaviours, who worked with me on the 'Researching Research' Project (Cook and Inglis 2012) and Professor Colin Biott, my master's degree supervisor, who had to contend with a lot of not knowing about what I was doing. He managed that by creating an ideal learning situation for me that was instrumental in adjusting my way of thinking for the rest of my life.

This summary of what I said at the conference is written in a more informal way. I do that not because I am not serious about what I say but because I am really serious about it, and because I am really serious I want to say it in a way that makes it most accessible for most people. I want to elevate disruption, mess and humility as concepts that are present in PAR precisely because they are present. For many years, however, they have been brushed under the carpet despite being some of the most important elements of transformational research. They are the root and branch of change.

What I am about to say comes out of a long journey - and struggle. Part of that struggle has centred on both understanding PAR and surfacing my own principles for the practice of PAR. Talking and writing about PAR has helped make my values theories explicit to me rather than leaving them lurking tacitly in the swampy recesses of my brain. Articulating what I am thinking has enabled me to know what my thoughts are and hence act on them. "What is articulated strengthens itself and what is not articulated tends towards non-being" (Czeslaw Milosz, quoted in Heaney:1999, no page number).

Provocation

My provocation is that when doing PAR, without pain there is no gain. The pain occurs during the process of getting in a mess with yourself (and others) as the route to creating new knowledge and understandings. This is central to PAR. If you think you already know what there is to know, PAR is not for you.

Central to my provocation is that:

- Disruption and mess are vital elements in change processes of AR and PAR
- Humility is necessary for recognising the need to change.

It is important to define PAR at this point because there can be a confusion between research with participatory methods and PAR. PAR is a research approach, a paradigm. It is shaped by the intention to adhere to specific epistemological criteria rather than the application of a set of

methods. It is recognised by the way it attends to the principles and characteristics that identify it as a research approach and change mechanism.

The centrality of participation differentiates PAR from forms of applied research that engage people by using participatory methods but where the study itself has been designed without their participation/agency. PAR aims to include those whose lives and/or work are central to a situation in processes of collaborative critical enquiry to generate knowledge to improve that situation. The overarching principle for PAR is that such participation fundamentally affects all aspects of the research (ICPHR 2013:5). This includes initiating and shaping the question; collecting and generating data; making sense and meaning from what is generated; applying what has been learnt and sharing that with wider audiences in culturally appropriate and diverse forms. Their involvement goes beyond being merely information givers.

> …ownership, that is, responsible agency in the production of knowledge and improvement of practice. Mere involvement implies none of this and creates the risk of co-option and exploitation of people in the realization of the plans of others. (McTaggart 1997:28).

In PAR it is intended that all those involved can work together to generate theories, knowledge and take action. Involved researchers who have no lived-experience of that situation, despite the fact they might be considered experts, do not make all the decisions about how to generate data and make sense of it. If the work of the research is dominated by those in positions of power, or by the knowledge of those who speak out with confidence and authority, or those that speak loudest and with the most insistence, then it will be their voices that shape what is understood from the research and the actions taken on the basis of that. Participatory researchers posit that when certain knowledges are not sought, or not received with authority and credibility, a perspective is missing. Silencing the voices of people who find themselves marginalised, wittingly or unwittingly, leads to voices of people with power shaping the world of others (Harris et al 2018). PAR is fundamentally collaborative. It challenges us to think about who does research, who generates theories and knowledge and who takes action.

Disruption: disturbing what is

The way in which we have understood validity and rigour in research has, however, been built predominantly on a way of thinking that reifies certainty. A question is formulated, and data gathered and analysed, using predetermined methods controlled by an expert researcher. The rigorous application of these methods by the researcher is seen as a way to construct a truth from what they have collected. It is a linear, means-ends approach that produces technical, rational forms of knowledge framed by the assumptions of the researcher about what the question should be and the best way to find the answers. If social research becomes dominated by such technicist formulations, it can lose the radical, enquiring, edge and become that type of research that, as Sloman wryly stated “either tells you something you knew already or tells you nothing or tells you something which is obvious non-sense (Sloman 1980 quoted by Winter 1985). Indeed by slavishly following a pathway or method “We may have been learning a great deal about how to pursue an incorrect course with a maximum of precision” (Deutscher et al 1993:25).

To disrupt this certainty-based thinking about research is not easy. It has been shaped by a set of research didactics which have, in turn, been shaped by experts in the field of research. This set of experts are then placed in positions of judging others based on their criteria. new knowledge that emanates from collaborative forms of research, knowledge that may contradict our current perceptions, we have to go into spaces yet to be known. This means putting aside the sanctity of knowing. PAR celebrates the value of not always knowing, or being the knower.

PAR does not privilege one set of knowledge as expert knowledge but cultivates critical dialogue among the range of people involved. The explicit intention is to include knoweldges that historically have been seldom heard in research practises. Some people who are seldom heard can, however, find it hard to have their voices heard, even when invited, and given the space to do so. Fricker (2007) termed this deep level of exclusion "epistemic injustice". Epistemic injustice occurs when "someone is ingenuously downgraded and/or disadvantaged in respect of their status" Fricker (2017:53). She argues that there are populations that have not had the same opportunities to rehearse and understand the crux of the issues that affect their lives and so find it difficult to make sense of their own experience, let alone articulate it. This "puts them at an unfair disadvantage in comprehending and/or getting others to comprehend an experience" (Fricker 2017:53). It leads to deflated levels of credibility being given to a speaker's word, and listeners believing their arguments are less competent or sincere because of how the argument is being framed, and indeed, who is making that argument. Recognising epistemic injustice and its impact is part of disrupting a status quo skewed towards an approach that elevates the voices of those who can and have. We must take a critical look not only at who can be the knower but how that knowledge can be heard.

Below is a personal story about my experience when I positioned myself as the knower. It describes a disruption that had an enormous effect, not only on what I was doing at the time, but on my understanding of the essential features of AR. Very early on my AR apprenticeship I was working and researching with a group of parents of pre-schoolers with autism. We, as in the practitioners (teachers and speech and language specialists) had designed 6 weeks of intensive work with the children which could be watched, behind a two-way mirror, by the families. I would work with the families to both offer what I knew about autism and its characteristics and simultaneously commentate on what the children were doing during the session in relation to that. To research what was happening we would hold reflective conversations held between practitioners and parents and capture our impressions in notebooks and diaries. This meant the parents could work in partnership with the practitioners in both seeing what the children were doing and contributing their thinking about it. My bubble was, however, burst very abruptly. In one of our discussion groups I was offering the parents what I knew about the development of children with autism, when one mother became very upset and angry. She shouted at me – saying that she didn't know why I was telling her all of this about eye contact and playing - she just wanted him to talk.

I went home feeling rather battered and even a little hurt. I had been telling them about autism because I felt it was wrong that I should know things about autism that they were not aware of. It would seem that this was not what they wanted. After much anguished thinking I decided that I would speak to the parents about why I had been telling them these things. I explained that I now realised that finding out all about autism was not what everyone wanted. I then asked them what they really wanted to do. They said they wanted to spend the time watching the children through the mirror, as they never had a chance to see how their children behaved without them. When they were present their children acted differently. They also wanted to talk with each other about their children, what their children were doing at the session and at home, and their feelings about that. So that is what we did. When a parent noticed their child doing something we would all watch and talk together about it. After a while I found I could throw in my bit too if it seemed appropriate. It seemed to be working for the parents, but not in the way I had envisaged.

Given how badly things had gone, at first I thought I must have been doing AR incorrectly. I was not. I came to realise that challenge and disruption are an important part of the AR process. As part of the data collection for the research I made notes about what had happened. As I wrote it brought me to the point where I realised that the problem stemmed from me thinking I knew what

would help the parents without even speaking with them about it. When the parent disrupted the session, I had to seriously reflect on what it meant to work together and my role in that. What was our relationship for and who drove it? To help me in this my supervisor, Colin Biott, pointed me in the direction of a book by Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis (Becoming Critical Education Knowledge and Action Research 1984). This book has had a big influence on what I do, say and think and the way I work since. It considered theory and practice in the light of philosophical treatises; it looked at methodological debates: it introduced me to critical theory in a way I could grasp, and it was ultimately very practical. Their elevation of the notion of criticality helped me disrupt my thinking my practice as 'expert'! Why had I thought that what I was about to do was about working WITH the parents when I was driving it? I had used my relationship with the parents to tell them what I thought they needed. How arrogant of me! By disrupting the session the parent had forced me to consider more deeply my way of working and how I had used both my position as the facilitator and my standing as the educator/expert to force my understanding of what I thought they needed to know upon them. That was not an easy reflection to experience. It left me feeling very unsettled about the way forward – in a mess.

When our trusty scaffolding of presumption and assumption has been removed we are likely to feel in a mess. My contention is that this is what this kind of research is for, to get us to the 'swampy lowlands' (Schon 1983) where confusing 'messes' reside.

Mess: making space for learning

To learn something new about an element of practice or behaviour in which you already have invested time and expertise, that you rely on as a touchstone, and to reconsider your assumptions, can be challenging for all parties. When people begin to question their previous frameworks for action, their beliefs or professional imperatives, it can create disorientation and leave them not knowing what to do: feeling 'in a mess'. In PR such messes are recognised as necessary for change to happen (Cook 2009). Disturbing what is known, getting in a mess, is a pivotal point in PAR. But not any old mess. For example, the general mess where we randomly throw things into a box, rarely return to investigate and sort what is there, and maybe, eventually, just throw it all way, is not useful to us in our research process.

Figure 1: General Mess (Cook, 2021:6)

Nor is it the type of mess where you have all the pieces, and the picture they are going to make, but the pieces are in a jumble. This would be akin to Slomans's point about 'telling you something you already knew' (above)

Figure 2: Jumble awaiting a specified order (Cook, 2021:7)

The type of mess that is helpful to us in PAR arises from the gathering of different knowledges and understandings and through the collaborative learning process putting them together in a way that we did not previously have the knowledge to do. If we imagine the collected knowledges as bricks that fit together, but we must work together to make something that works for us, something that uses what we know to be important pieces to build something we have not constructed before it is this kind of mess (Figure 3). The pieces are not random, and neither is the outcome, but the outcome may be unexpected all the same.

Figure 3: Mess as possibility. (Cook, 2021:7)

Historically research has been portrayed a starting with a clear plan or design and pathway for that research. Any messy elements would be brushed under the carpet. In PAR we may not know exactly what question(s) will emerge from our enquiry process. As those involved in the research develop their ability to engage in critical discourse and thinking, both those who are seldom heard and those for whom having their voices heard is an expectation, then new questions will emerge, new understandings formed that change the way people think and act. The numerous encounters with the issues, this recursive process, offers spaces for people to see differently in the light of their previous articulations. Knowledge generated in this way creates change within the process and moves with time. There is not:

> ….participation followed by research and then hopefully action. Instead there are countless tiny cycles of participatory reflection on action, learning about action and then new informed action which is in turn the subject of further reflection. Change does not happen at 'the end' – it happens throughout. (Wadsworth 1998:7)

Engaging with the mess is "… a complex process of inquiry, involving a wide range of techniques, where messy is taken to mean difficult, not careless. (Mellor, 1999: abstract)

Designing for Disruption and Mess

Many years after my encounter with the parent described above, I was involved in the Family Based Positive Support (FaBPos) research project. Those involved were family carers whose

adult relatives have learning disabilities and behaviour that challenges. Clinical psychologists wanted to research how to deliver a meaningful stress reduction course with the families. The psychologists facilitating the course were dedicated to supporting family carers. They were well known to some of the families and well liked but aware that their practices were not supporting the families so wanted to research the course. They didn't realise, however, quite how disillusioned and negative families felt about the services they offered.
A research design for understanding the course was developed with family carers. Each course consisted of 5 sessions of Mindfulness and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy facilitated by the psychologists. At the core of the research design were communicative spaces for shared critical reflection. These occurred after each session. Initially the space was occupied by me (as facilitator), the research assistant and the parents. As their relationship with family carers developed, the psychologists joined in.

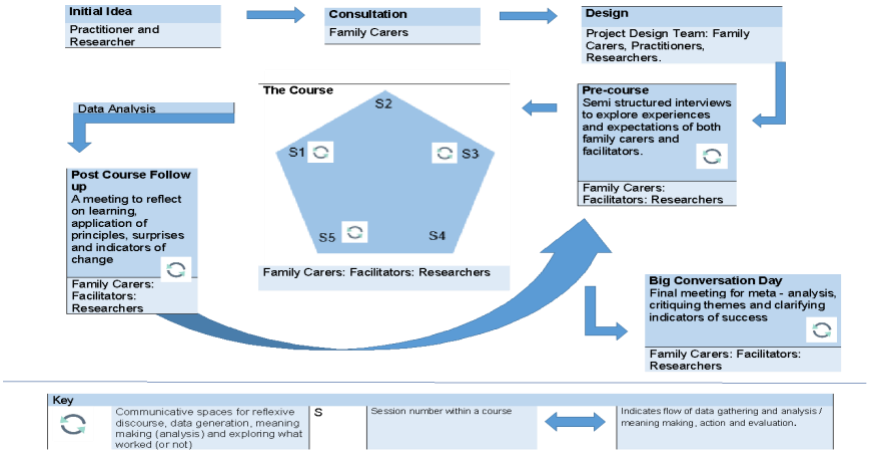


Figure 4: Research Design (Cook, Noone & Thomson:2019)

In the first session of the first course, and nearing the end of that session, but before the discussion time, a family carer exploded pretty much in the same way the parent had with me all those years ago. She was angry with the facilitators and said that what they were doing was not what she wanted. She didn't want professionals always telling her 'stuff' that had no meaning for her at this point. She had things she wanted to say. She wanted the psychologists to really understand how things were for her and the other family carers. She wanted to speak with the others, hear from them, and she wanted to offer her knowledge and expertise to other family carers. Most of all she did not want to be told things - to be talked at by professionals. She told the psychologists how they had no understanding of her everyday life and challenges – the other family carers joined in.

The lead psychologist went home in much in the same condition as I had in the previous story, upset and concerned about whether the family carers would want to come back for the next session. How could they continue if family carers did not want what they were offering? A renowned expert in the field of building resilience he cared deeply about supporting family carers and this had shaken his confidence: he felt in a mess. Not knowing know how to move forward he wondered if they should end the course at this point.

Immediately after the session in the discussion session (Communicative Space: see figure 4 above) I met with the family carers to discuss their first experience of the course. They were very animated and cross about what had happened. I asked them if this course was, as they were saying, not what they wanted, should we end it here? Perhaps what they needed was the time

to come together without facilitators? This was not what they wanted. They explained that they had been to too many groups where family carers had talked together and it just became a moaning space. They could see a facilitator roll in pulling them out of the moaning and contributing where appropriate to help them learn to move forward from dark places. They felt that what the facilitators had talked about today sounded as if it could be interesting but, as they talked amongst themselves they realised they were not yet in a place to listen. Their discussion about this then surfaced some key insights into where to go next, that they had tacitly known but had not had the space to articulate and make explicit. If the course was to work, the family carers realised they needed to have a say in how it worked. They came to the course with an expectation of being able to help each other out, to offer their own experiences to others, to find out how others managed, what helped them and what challenged them, and they had not been offered space during the session to do this. If there was space for this then they could see a way forward and they wanted to try it.

Humility

I reported back to the facilitators. The lead facilitator opened the second session by explaining why he had started the session by telling them things. He then gave space to the family carers to talk about what was important to them. This open and honest discussion led to reshaping the content of each course to include this time. The opportunity for family carers to articulate thoughts and feelings enabled us to all to learn about what might make the course more successful. For the lead psychologist one of the key learnings was the need to be able to step back and give space for others.

> It's so easy for us as professionals to think these are the latest psychological benefits. We should make them available. Which is a decent start. But how you go about making them available is you do unto them. I think one of the things that we've learnt in this course is you don't do unto them. That's so crucial. So, dismantle the doing unto (Facilitator A FaBPos:Cook, Noone & Thomson, 2019)

We should not underestimate the challenge of this transformation. It challenged professional practice and the underpinnings of training for their profession. As another psychologist involved in the course said,

> We're brought up on training and not...facilitating. Not being in control in the traditional way creates anxiety … my default position, when I feel like that, is to over prepare…to have an agenda… (Facilitator B FaBPos: Cook, Noone & Thomson, 2019).

Working in collaboration involves some real hard personal work. It invariably means ways of acting that have been developed through the lens of our professional training and learning, or our life experience. This can be difficult, if not painful, but to learn we need to disrupt our complacency in our own knowledge. AR is not about keeping in smooth waters, it is about diving under the waters to see what lurks down there. It involves "… toil, distress, trouble: exertions of the faculties of the body or mind … an activity which is at times likely to be uncomfortable" (Sumara and Luce-Kapler 1993:393)

In both my stories professionals had to disrupt their professional assumptions of good practice with family carers. To do some learning for themselves. When you are considered an 'expert', or think of yourself as an expert, this necessitates humility. To have humility does not mean to have a low opinion of yourself. It involves the ability to view yourself as an individual with talents as well as flaws, not being arrogant but not having low self-esteem. Humility allows you to be consciously be aware what you bring to this world but also recognise that others in the world bring riches and

purpose. Humility enables us to contribute as part of a wider picture – and not presume we already have the picture.

Disruption, mess and humility: bedfellows for critical thinking and change

> Capturing and negotiating personal realities within a discursive milieu (the 'messy area') provides a communicative and dialectic engagement that allows understandings of philosophies, principles and practice to surface. As such it reduces opportunities for building practice on rhetoric and builds in fought-for interpretations that go beyond the individual. (Cook, 2009:288)

Bringing a range of perspectives together to seek out what we know and what we can learn from each other as a vehicle for making practical change happen, particularly in 'wicked circumstances' is not easy and there will be no blueprint for it. It is a balancing act. The seeds of change are all around us but we have to recognise them for what they are, complex, messy, often difficult to surface, but without them the status quo will remain.

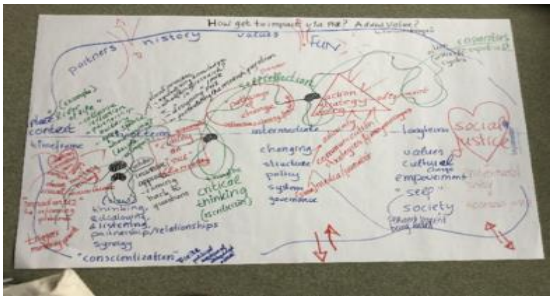
Looking over the two brief insights into my own experiences the common denominators were the disruption that came from the challenge, the subsequent mess that leaves people in, and the humility to learn.

1. Without disruption we are merely drawing on what we know now, not forging new knowledge. This means we retain the status quo. Disruption is crucial to the process of letting go of our own rhetoric, understanding and partial knowledge. PAR is a shared dialectical rather than didactic processes.
2. Messes in research arise from disruptions. They are central to the meaning making and change processes of the research.
3. Humility, that mix of knowing your talents as well as gaps, of not being arrogant but not having low-self-esteem, enables disruption and messes to be embraced as learning spaces.

As action researchers/participatory action researchers we have to ensure there are spaces in research design that that enable disruption and mess to happen but happen in a way that supports all those within the research process to learn for themselves and create change. We don't come with a plan, but we listen, engage, and listen again and then start to draw out meaning from what has taken place, in the open and together.

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time
> Through the unknown, remembered gate
>
> TS Eliot (1989:48)

This rather Rumsfeldian process of thinking we know what we are doing, though not knowing what we are doing, to realising that together we have a better idea about what we are doing and why we are doing it, is central to the rigour or PAR. If we are told that 'good science' is a linear process, and part of its rigour is that it does not deviate from the plan, participatory researchers have good arguments to offer as to why rigorous research might look like this.



So, embrace the co-labouring, the challenge, the pain, the disruption and the mess, with humility. I would end there, but I find that when I proposed this provocation, I missed out one element I believe also needs to be central to PAR, and that is the importance of having fun. We have to remember, the research we are doing is 'human-being' research, it can be with people who are busy, stressed, ill, frightened, anxious or lost, and people who are not used to having their voices taken seriously. Why would they come together if they were not are having some fun in some way, like this man….

> "I just love having information and coming up with new things for it. Just love it … I've got my little drug going where I've had all the discussion and everything going. And information going and flying all over the place. And it's just like, Yessss! … Aye. I just love learning. (David: man with learning difficulties. Cook and Inglis 2008:56)

….but he would readily add that chocolate cake is helpful too.

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Finding the Sweet Spot for Insider Action Research:

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In his provocation keynote Professor David Coghlan from Trinity College Dublin wondered if action research, and particularly insider action research, has a 'sweet spot'. A sweet spot is typically defined as an ideal location, area or combination of factors for a particular activity or purpose. Professor Coghlan drew on the work of Edgar Schein who has argued that the essence of understanding and working with human systems is to focus on the process of how we relate rather than the structure of the relationship. Coghlan suggested that building and maintaining collaborative relationships as a key quality factor in the action research process constitutes a sweet spot.

Schein describes four levels of relationships to explicate both their complexity and the processes of managing such relationships. *Level Minus One* marks a negative relationship that is built on power and dominance with the more powerful exploiting, coercing, and manipulating the other. L*evel One* is a transactional relationship based on formal role definitions and characterized by professional distancing. *Level Two* describes relationships where people get to know one another as individuals and develop a deeper degree of openness and trust than in Level One. *Level Three* relationships are characterized by close friendships, intimacy, and love.

Coghlan concluded that the collaborative relationships, and *Level Two* relationships more specifically, that are built, developed and sustained in action research constitute its sweet spot.

Recommended Reading

Coghlan, D. (2024) *Edgar H Schein: The Artistry of a Reflexive Organizational Scholar-Practitioner.* Abingdon: Routledge

Schein, E.H. and Schein, P.A. (2021) *Humble Inquiry: The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling*. 2nd ed. San Diego: Berrett-Kohler

Conference Presentations

Development of a Nursing Education for Greenland:

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Abstract
This is an English translation of a paper from Tikiusaaq, a union magazine for nurses in Greenland, addressing challenges regarding nursing education in Greenland. Ilisimatusarfik, the University of Greenland, is therefore working on developing action research to improve nursing education. Preliminary results from the first part of the action research design, focusing on describing the existing nursing practices, are exemplified here. From this, we may conclude that future action research on developing a desirable and feasible implementable nursing education should focus on more than just the technical and academic aspect. There is likely a need to develop activities that promote well-being and prepare nursing students for the emotional challenges of being responsible for nursing care in smaller towns and settlements where there may not even be a doctor.

Introduction
The Greenlandic population is currently facing an acute need for more nurses treatment, health promotion disease prevention, thereby enabling elderly citizens, among others, to remain in smaller settlements rather than moving to larger cities or even Denmark.
This paper proposes a revision of the nursing education program to align it with the requirements of the Greenlandic healthcare system, drawing on experiences, preliminary findings, and the ongoing development of the project "*Retention of more nurses in education and professional life*" (1). This project is conducted at the Nursing Education Department of Ilisimatusarfik, the University of Greenland. It aims to increase the number of nurses educated for Greenland by focusing on improving well-being, education, and retention among nursing students and newly qualified nurses.
Nursing students enrolled in the current nursing education program at Ilisimatusarfik encounter challenges during their academic journey and may not always feel adequately prepared for working life within the Greenlandic healthcare system.

Healthcare in Greenland
Creating a coherent healthcare system for the 56,000 inhabitants of the world's largest island, stretching 2650 km from north to south (2), presents a significant challenge. The transportation between towns can only be done by plane, which can cause delays for both patient transport to treatment at the national hospital in Nuuk and Denmark, due to weather-related challenges. Greenland, like the rest of the world, is facing demographic changes characterized by an aging population with lifestyle- and age-related diseases. This demographic shift affects citizens' activity levels and their ability to engage in social relationships, placing extensive pressure on the healthcare system (2).

Like global trends, Greenland's healthcare system faces shortages of nurses and other healthcare professionals, negatively impacting patient safety (3). In Greenland, the nurse-to-population ratio stands at 5.2 nurses per 1000 inhabitants, which falls below the Danish and European averages of 16.7 and 8.4, respectively (4).
An internal survey conducted in April 2022 revealed that only 57.5% of the 305 standardized positions were filled by permanent nursing staff, with 100 of them being Greenland-born, while

the remainder comprised temporary employments, some lasting as briefly as two to three weeks (5).

Nursing Education at Ilisimatusarfik

The nursing education program at Ilisimatusarfik offers a four-year bachelor's degree, primarily conducted in Danish following Danish/European models, albeit adapted to the specific Greenlandic context (6). The curriculum comprises two-thirds theoretical coursework and one-third clinical practice, covering fundamental nursing, public health, health promotion, and the unique aspect of Greenlandic nursing education: acute Arctic nursing (6).

However, a relatively high dropout rate of 20% (4) exceeds the average for similar programs in other countries (7) with 16% of student(6)ts needing to repeat a course or semester, extending the program duration to five years due to once-annual admission (7). An explanation for the high dropout rates and prolonged duration may stem from psychosocial challenges. Research indicates that young individuals' experiences of growing up in vulnerable homes, coupled with the prevalence of suicide among friends and/or family members, may impede their learning focus (8).

Moreover, linguistic challenges affect 90% of nursing students who come from coastal towns (4), of which 70% consider themselves Greenlandic speakers, facing difficulties in communicating in Danish (9). In opposition, students from the capital, Nuuk, may find it easier to adapt to Danish and European models, as they constitute the 30% who are proficient in Danish or both languages (9).

Furthermore, studies imply that Inuit populations and other indigenous communities may possess distinct cognitive frameworks compared to individuals in larger European urban settings. Despite Greenland evolving into a multicultural society, traditional cultural values may persist (10). These values may encompass a holistic approach to life, potentially shaped by upbringing in harsh environments where communal ties and rituals linking people with nature are pivotal for survival and harmony (11). In such a context, the conventional division of subjects across semesters, such as patient experiences, pathology, nursing, and public health, may appear dissonant (6).

Conclusively, nursing students' ability to complete an academic program at Ilisimatusarfik may be influenced by psychosocial, linguistic, and cultural challenges.

Several issues necessitate action:

- Severe shortage of nurses
- Curriculum of Danish/European models and textbooks
- Didactics not always aligned with Greenlandic approach
- High rates of student dropout and/or prolonged study

Methodology

The project adopts an action research design to enhance the nursing education in collaboration with all involved shareholders who may directly be affected by challenges from insufficient support of young students and an educational structure inadequately preparing them for professional practice (12).

This entails researchers, educators, students, newly qualified, and experienced nurses engaging in three collaborative processes: 1) analyzing current nursing practices, 2) identifying

a desirable nursing education, and 3) feasibility of implementation within existing frameworks (13).

The first phase has been completed through participant observations accumulation of 115 hours and 39 interviews ranging from 10 to 90 minutes with nursing students, newly qualified nurses, and their colleagues at hospitals, health centers, and stations in all five regions of Greenland (14,15).

Description of current Nursing Practices
Through our observations and interviews, we gained insight into the different regional conditions. The National Hospital in Nuuk seems to have similarities to Danish hospitals, with opportunities to offer interdisciplinary collaboration and more standardized care and treatment. At regional hospitals and local health centers, nurses work more independently and flexibly in strong communities alongside office staff, healthcare assistants, porters, and community workers during periods without medical coverage.

Despite differences between Nuuk and coastal towns, generally nurses and other healthcare professionals admirably collaborate to ensure the functionality of the healthcare system, despite challenging and almost impossible working conditions from a Western perspective. Unlike in Europe, nursing in Greenland is less divided into specialties in the healthcare sector, which require nurses to acquire a broad set of skills. We found that nurses are engaged in administrative and coordinating duties while concurrently managing both chronic and acute medical conditions. Including assisting in childbirth, casting broken bones, suturing wounds, caring for patients with mental illness and suicide risk, and conducting blood tests, and X-rays. Additionally, nurses must address citizens with a high prevalence of mental illness and social- and lifestyle-related chronic diseases.

This multifaceted nursing work and responsibility can be exemplified by a scenario involving a urinary tract infection in a health center in a town with around a thousand inhabitants. A nurse, referred to as Kirsten, has been employed there for nearly two years, possessing extensive experience across various nursing areas. During participant observation, Kirsten mentioned that the doctor left earlier than planned because they perceived not being able to handle the many diverse tasks. With two short-term employed nurses, Kirsten assumes primary responsibility for nursing, including collaborating with a community worker, referred to as Ivalo, employed in a small settlement.

Fieldnote
Kirsten is at her desk, and the phone rings. Kirsten: "*Hello, Ivalo*." Kirsten listens and now and then responds with "*mm*" and "*yes*." There seems to be silence on the other end. "*Yes, I was planning to test the urine as well*," Kirsten's tone is gentle and accepting. Kirsten continues, "*What else do you think we can do?*" Once again, Kirsten listens, responding with "*mm*" and "*yes*." After a while, Kirsten suggests, "*That's a good idea to take some values and then we should collect urine for culture. And she needs to ensure she drinks enough, you know*."

Follow-up Interview
Interviewer: "*Can you tell us about the phone call*?"
Kirsten: "*Yes, it was Ivalo who called. She's a community worker, and I've had her here to train her in some basic tasks like taking urine samples and vital signs. She told me about a patient experiencing discomfort during urination. Naturally, I thought it might be a urinary infection, but we also must remember that in* [name of town omitted], *there's a lot of gonorrhea and*

chlamydia. So, I thought we should test the urine, even though the dipstick clearly indicated a urinary infection.
Interviewer: "*What motivated you to involve her*?"
Kirsten: "*Well, I'm entirely dependent on the community workers and what they see and do in the villages. I can go there by boat to support them, but that's not possible all the time*."

Kirsten's use of "*naturally*" suggests that the situation may initially seem straightforward with discomfort during urination, indicating a treatable urinary infection with antibiotics. Kirsten also does not appear stressed by this task, ultimately deciding which tablets Ivalo should dispense to the patient from her stock in the settlement. Making decisions about which antibiotic is likely to be most effective (which can be looked up on www.promedicin.dk) and dispensing seems not particularly challenging.

In addition to expected competencies in basic nursing care such as liquid intake in urinary infections, the situation demands diagnostic capacities in the absence of a doctor. Kirsten considers alternative diagnoses beyond the immediate one based on her knowledge of local public health issues, specifically sexually transmitted diseases prevalent in the area. She suggests further testing to rule out the possibility of gonorrhea and chlamydia, as well as measuring vital signs to assess whether the infection may have progressed to a critical condition such as sepsis.

Moreover, Kirsten explicitly states that she depends on her collaboration with community workers to successfully facilitate nursing work collectively. Communication, occurring primarily via telephone, as we have observed, is a common medium for nursing work in Greenland, to exchange of necessary information. Through "*mm*" and "*yes*," Kirsten indicates her continuous presence on the other end of the phone, and with her friendly tone, she involves Ivalo in decisions about the patient's care plan. Kirsten highlights and appreciates Ivalo's thoughts and perspectives.

Kirsten seems to manage the professional challenges and does not complain about the many shifts [i.e., she can be called at all hours], which she must cover due to the impossibility of hiring nurses for the health center. Kirsten says: when the interviewer asked if she could handle it: "*Well, what else could I do? There was no one else to take them*."

The case illustrates that nurses' care work extends beyond what is expected in the standardized treatment of a urinary infection. Personally, the nurse willingly contributes to the healthcare system by covering many shifts. She manages telephone consultations, demonstrating friendly collaboration with a short-trained community worker to maintain a functional daily routine despite staffing shortages and absent doctors. These actions require an understanding of the responsibilities of a nurse and a community worker when working in place of a doctor to avoid legal consequences. The nursing care work here requires significant autonomy with knowledge of delegation responsibilities, basic nursing care, diagnosis, symptom/disease knowledge, medical treatment, and public health. This fosters teamwork with community workers for citizens/patients, in addition to the less measurable communication and collaboration skills.

Future Action Research
The scenario presented above exemplifies the concept of invisible nursing work, a phenomenon that research has shown to be challenging to quantify within standardized systems (16). This challenge is particularly evident in regions like Greenland, where access to healthcare professionals such as nurses or doctors can be sparse. In such contexts, nurses stationed in

towns or settlements often find themselves undertaking a myriad of roles beyond traditional nursing duties beyond the immediate expectations (17).

For these myriad tasks, responsibilities, and collaborations, nursing students may not necessarily be adequately prepared through the existing nursing education. While such tasks may be manageable for highly experienced nurses, existing research indicates that it is precisely this autonomous coordination of care that newly qualified nurses may struggle with (18).

The shortage of healthcare professionals, including nurses and doctors, is not a challenge that can be resolved in the short term. Thus, the overall purpose of the future action research is to collaborate with nursing students, educators, practical nurses, and researcher on revising nursing education to develop retention-promoting activities. The aim is to educate and retain a minimum of ten more nurses annually in education and work life to reduce the shortage of permanent nursing staff by approximately 50% over a period of about ten years.
With the preliminary results presented here, participants in action research may already conclude:

- Nursing education should not only focus on the academic aspect.
- A highly holistic approach in the situation above may align with the mindset of a nursing student of Inuit background and could be utilized in curriculum planning.
- There is a need for the development of support for students facing linguistic and social challenges.

Newly qualified nurses should, in addition to practical and theoretical nursing expertise, also be prepared for the social, emotional, and organizational challenges of managing multifaceted tasks without physician coverage.

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Marking our own homework – a 21st century competency: thoughts about what action research might offer our times:

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In this article I share some of the elements of my keynote talk at the CARN 2023 Spring online conference. 'Marking our own homework' was a deliberately provocative title: in my work as a learning partner in the UK, several people have said to me that 'we can't mark our own homework'. People told me that they wanted to generate evidence to inform and generate learning or support change, yet seemed stuck with notions of rigour that assume quality arises from the engagement of an external, 'independent' evaluator, rather than the processes of our collective engagement and inquiry.

On bolder days, I stated in reply: 'on the contrary, that exactly what we need to do!' The need to assess or evaluate our timely actions in complex situations requires a different way of thinking about 'rigour' or quality that recognises complexity and is more systemic and relational. Joan O'Donnell reminds us that any systemic inquiry must begin with asking questions about our individual and collective agency:

> *"Agency is a sense of having a capacity to take action. It is not something that others can bestow upon us: it is an inside-out job and it involves developing your reflexive muscle, that is, your capacity to reflect on your own reflections and use those insights to inform action." (O'Donnell, 2023)*

Learning from that action is an 'inside-out job' too. We need to pay constant attention to what we are doing and the impact it is making in the world, to ask if our time and efforts are worthwhile, how our theories of change are being challenged, and whether we think we stand a chance of creating the change we say we want to see. These evaluative questions and judgments, questions about axiology – of what is worthwhile – cannot be outsourced.

By way of introduction to the keynote, I shared two quotes of significance to my own development as an action researcher that resonate for me. First, a paraphrase of Richard Rorty (1999) shared by Peter Reason at the University of Bath in 2002 when I was a postgraduate action research student.

> *"The point of research is to talk to each other about what we ought to be doing." (Reason, 2002, quoted in Sharp and Balogh, 2021)*

I've written elsewhere about the power of this statement for me at the time (Sharp and Balogh, 2021, p.159) I still find it exhilarating, as it so clearly positions action research as an approach to inquiry – to dialogue, collaboration, exploring purposes, living values, and taking worthwhile action.

A second quote came from a source some 20 years later, as a participant in an 'Illuminating Leadership Festival' hosted by Collective Leadership Scotland; in considering 'Not Knowing' we explored the challenge put to us in an RTE podcast:

"We might be moving towards a time when we see certainty or "accountants' reality" as a lack of rigour. …being able to say you 'don't know' is a question of a skill. Said from a position of negative capability, where 'to know' is to lack rigour, to lack multiple perspectives on something". (Steve Volk, RTE Culture File Weekly 15 January 2022)

In widespread use, the term 'wicked issues' has come to be associated with an understanding of problems that exhibit such complexity: where there is no clear relationship between cause and effect, huge uncertainty, and constant change, such that only collective engagement can hope to begin to address such problems. Whilst since 2002, in the worlds of public policy and action research that I inhabit, there is now greater recognition of these realities where collaboration and recognition of multiple ways of knowing are essential, and dialogue is needed more than ever. Yet, whilst action research seems highly relevant to addressing such issues, there is still a lack of understanding of what it offers and how we might judge the quality of our own inquiries.

These questions about the quality of our work, whose view of quality counts and how we judge the impact we can make in the world are central to any efforts to engage with others in the act of creating change. Yet, I have found there can be little patience and often dismissal for 'philosophy' when there are so many immediate practical needs to address, so little money, and time. And even at the best of times, these are often conceptually difficult issues to engage with and to encourage people to talk about.

Having set the scene with these two quotes, I went on to share two very different but related pieces of recent work, firstly to sketch out a situation where these dilemmas are very much to the fore, and then to offer some tools for prompting and navigating such conversations.

One important context for me is my role as a learning partner for What Matters to You (WM2U).[2] Funded by two major philanthropic trusts from the UK, WM2U is described as a 'voice-led approach to system change'. Essentially it seeks to offer support earlier so that children flourish within their own families, rather than having to be taken into the residential care system. The system change ambition of the work is expressed as seeking to 'shift the conditions that are keeping problems in place', by which we mean:

*"… the cultural and organisational values, mindsets, practices, and behaviours that are often taken for granted or unnoticed." (*Kania, et al 2018)

[2] https://wm2u.co.uk/

As action researchers will know, when you step into a local context, there's a myriad of different people involved, each with their own understandings, perspectives, and roles. And there's a lot to take in. In WM2U, there's a host of community members, many that face considerable personal hardship and trauma and who are largely involved as informal volunteers. There's a paid coordinator and others in professional roles, including teachers, social workers, service managers, funders, and local government leaders. They each have their own concerns, priorities, and ways of seeing and being in the world. It's a testing ground, in every sense. We have learned that change is possible. It can be small scale and slow, and yet also meaningful and significant.

I expect that this context and the challenges it presents will sound familiar. It has lots in common with other initiatives that are looking for earlier intervention and prevention of adverse outcomes from public services. The purpose of the keynote wasn't to focus on this work, but to use this example to describe the typical, messy, human context where success depends on the quality of relationships that can be developed.

WM2U seeks to address the systemic drivers of inequity by giving weight to the views of parents and community members, giving voice to people that are often not heard or perspectives that are discounted. And so, any claims of 'learning', 'evidence' or 'impact' must have credibility with those with most at stake as well as others invested in the work and our approach to learning together must be systemic, inclusive, and participatory. We simply have to talk to each other about what we are, and what we ought, to be doing, what we call how we 'Grow as We Go'.

What might help us to have such conversations as we practise doing change together? Here I drew on a different, more theoretical piece of work undertaken for Collective Leadership Scotland (Sharp, 2018). This review explored complexity, evaluative thinking, collaborative inquiry, appreciative inquiry, and action research and summarised some of the key working assumptions of a prospective '5th generation' or 'new territory for evaluation'.

The report concludes with a series of twenty-four 'provocative propositions', symbolic statements used to provoke or generate thinking and action, made in bold, positive terms to stretch, challenge, and encourage innovation. These propositions are future-forming and action focused, relational and appreciative, promote collaborative inquiry and explore participation, co-production, and knowledge co-creation. They have been tested out in a number of different settings (Sharp, 2022).

For the keynote, I settled on a selection of ten propositions that can help us develop a different orientation to evaluation (Research for Real, 2021). The propositions are numbered to distinguish them from each other –there is no particular order in this list other than the understanding that *inquiry is a form of intervening* must be a defining feature of evaluation and one that is shared with action research. I have retained the original numbering here for ease of reference. Conference participants engaged well with these propositions and as you read on you may want to consider how they may help you to 'grow as you go' too.

- **What excites, interests, or resonates with you?**
- **What feelings does this bring up for you - those you welcome or struggle with?**
- **What values and assumptions do you notice (your own and others) and how they are being affirmed or challenged?**
- **What would we like to happen more of the time?**

- **What are the resistances or difficulties that you experience or anticipate (for yourself and others)?**
- **What might it mean for your own work?**

1) **Treat inquiry as a form of intervening, not a separate, detached process:** we adopt a reflective stance and endorse self and peer participant observation and self-evaluation to increase the probability of success of a programme.

17) **Be a participant, not a spectator:** we are 'active learners.' We anticipate that inquiry will lead to changes in ourselves and the wider system of which we are a part.

4) **Embrace complexity:** we don't rush to problem-solve but take time to understand problems and issues in our local system from multiple perspectives and create feedback loops to enable our real-time learning.

14) **Focus on real-time learning through collaborative inquiry:** we reflect-in-action to discover more about our thinking and actions. This supports us to question our underlying assumptions and values to improve our immediate interactions and allows us to examine tacit or previously undiscussed assumptions and patterns of behaviour and reasoning.

20) **Seek multiple and diverse perspectives:** each of us is one expert amongst many. We are not looking for one truth, and we do not consider the belief in objectivity a sound basis for development and change. We work across boundaries and seek to learn from the complexity and richness of social behaviour.

15) **Talk about how to be comfortable with uncertainty, tentativeness and adopt humility in inquiry:** we recognise and work with the complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, paradox, tensions and contradictions revealed by inquiry as offering vital opportunities to learn. We resist certainties, closure and finality through precise measurement or hasty judgement of the phenomena we observe.

11) **Promote appreciative dialogue:** we seek to understand what is working well and what is valued in the 'here and now' to support emergence and explore aspirations. This understanding is the foundation for the future and having fresh eyes and ears helps to check whether our existing practices support and motivate us in our vision to build a better future. We recognise that 'improvement' may not always be needed.

13) **Promote generativity:** this helps people to listen with empathy and see old issues with new eyes. We recognise the part that emotion plays in creating cultures and seek to integrate acknowledgement of our feelings more explicitly into our work.

10) **Work with care:** we seek to promote relationships and avoid damaging them in the process of creating useful knowledge.

24) **Seek partnership in working relations:** we rarely work alone, even if we think we can.

In drafting this piece for the CARN bulletin, I sought reflections from some of those who had taken part on the day. I am grateful for their responses that illustrate the need to keep having generative conversations, for ourselves and with others, wherever the success of our actions depends on the quality of relationships that can be developed.

Ruth Balogh responds:

This set of questions from Cathy's Collective Leadership project is one of the most refreshing pieces of work I've encountered for a while. Framed with disarming simplicity they cut through the resistance I often feel towards engaging with the challenges they pose. In particular, the idea of inquiry itself as an intervention is manifestly true, but nonetheless unsettling. At the same time, it gives me permission to be the person I am in the room in its fullest sense, but also invites me to refrain from avoiding that too. There's space in between these two dispositions which offers me an opening to consider my relationships and responsibilities in the act of going around asking people questions!

David Powell responds:

I was inspired by Cathy's keynote at CARN in May 2023, so it has been an absolute treat to revisit it in this summary piece. John Hattie (2023, p.7), in Visible Learning: The Sequel, asserts that 'how teachers…*think* matters most. Their mind frames, ways of thinking, interpreting and evaluating are core to the success of teaching.' Cathy's piece points out that how we think as action researchers matters too, in particular how we think about evaluating our own research. For me, her propositions are a great thinking tool for new and experienced action researchers. I am about to start teaching a master's level Action Research module and intend to use Cathy's propositions as a way of initiating my new students into the practices of action research as they learn 'how to go on' as action researchers (Kemmis et al., 2014, p.57).

Jane Springett responds:

The issues outlined in this keynote resonate very much. It is sad that public organisations still hold on to the outdated idea that external evaluation is superior to internal reflection on action for change. This perception certainly was the case when I started as an participatory evaluator and that was many years ago. So little has changed. In those days I saw my role as the external evaluator as someone who holds the space in that short of time and of resources environment to which Cathy refers. It was an opportunity that allows people to reflect together and learn which they never feel able to do. The list of propositions provides a valuable framework for that space and reflects extensive wisdom accumulated by an experienced practitioner. Creating a space for reflection, however, requires addressing the important task of thinking about the world from a complexity perspective. In order to change the world, we have to change the frames through which we view reality. I have been fortunate in Canada to work with a growing number of people who are thinking in this way and creating change through action from this way of seeing the world.

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Summary of Living Educational Theory Research in the Real World: Results of reaching out to people and communities- A presentation to CARN 2023:

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Abstract
The results of professional practitioners reaching out to people and communities are analysed in terms of the living-educational-theories created and shared by professional practitioners and legitimated worldwide through the process of submitting for university accreditation, publication in peer-reviewed journals and presentation at conferences, such as CARN's. The analysis is focused on the creation of a 'collective imaginary' and the explication of an extended epistemology in the explanations for educational influences in learning. These valid, evidence and values-based explanations have been produced by professional practitioners as they explore the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice with values of human flourishing?". The embodied expressions of the meanings of values of human flourishing that are used as evaluative standards and explanatory principles in explanations for educational influences in learning are clarified and communicated using digital visual data from educational practice with a process of empathetic resonance.

Introduction
The paper starts by situating Living Educational Theory Research within real-world local and global contexts. This encompasses the introduction of the concept of the 'best loved-self' (e.g. Craig, 2013, 2020; Schwab, 1954, 1978) and relationships (e.g. Mounter, 2024; Whitehead & Huxtable, 2006).). Subsequently, we provide a concise overview of the components of Living Educational Theory Research as both a process and an expanding epistemology for practice. A living-educational-theory (Whitehead, 1989) is a valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanation of the practitioner-researcher for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located.

Diverse forms of data are presented and examined to illustrate the implications, significance and consequences of professional practitioners engaging in Living Educational Theory Research to fulfil their values-driven professional responsibilities as individuals and members of social collectives and as global citizens. The results of professional practitioners reaching out to people and communities are analysed in terms of the legitimated accounts of their living-educational-theories they create and make publically accessible worldwide. The analysis is focused on the creation of a 'collective imaginary' (Drewell, & Larsson, (2019) and the explication of an extended epistemology in the explanations for educational influences in learning. These validated, evidence and values-based explanations, have been produced by practitioner-researchers who accept their educational and professional responsibility for their own professional learning and development as they explore the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice with values of human flourishing?".

The ‘collective imaginary’ is focused on life-affirming and life-enhancing values expressed in accounts of Living Educational Theory Research created by practitioner-researchers with the intention of contributing to improving the ‘real world’ experienced in the present and future. The embodied expressions of the meanings of values of human flourishing that are used as explanatory principles in explanations for educational influences in learning, are clarified and communicated using digital visual data from educational practice with a process of empathetic resonance, which Whitehead originated.

The extended epistemologies are focused on the units of appraisal, standards of judgement and living-logics of these explanations for educational influences in learning. The units of appraisal include community and individually generated explanations for educational influences in learning. The standards of judgement are continually evolving as they are clarified in the course of the research and contexts of their use and the fluid inter-related sociocultural, historical and political ecologies within which they are formed. The standards of judgement are constituted by the unique constellation of the values used by individuals and communities in explanations for their educational influences in learning. The living-logics (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2024) distinguish forms of rationality that include insights from propositional and dialectical theories. The rationalities of living-logics transcend the rejection of either or both propositional and dialectical traditions of enquiry.

We make a distinction between educational research and education research. We understand *education* research to be research carried out within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of disciplines of education such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. The purpose of education researchers is to generate knowledge of philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education, in the form of, for example, conceptual theories. We understand *educational* research to be research carried out within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of the Discipline of Education. The purpose of educational researchers is to generate educational knowledge, in the form of, for example, their valid explanations, with values of human flourishing, for their educational influences in learning.

A distinction is made between being a member of a profession and being a professional. We believe that being a professional explicitly includes a responsibility of a practitioner to not only develop their expertise as experts in their field. They also have a responsibility to research to improve values-laden practice and theory and create knowledge that contributes to the growth of a global knowledgebase and in the process brings into existence a more humane, peaceful and safe world where people, communities and Humanity can flourish.

There are cultural influences in many social formations that serve to disempower members of the local real worlds that they form, and also the global real worlds we are all members of. For example, some universities and academic associations still promote quantitative research to the detriment of qualitative research. These cultural influences suppress self-study practitioner research and the inclusion of ‘I’ in legitimate academic research. When professional practitioners encounter such constraints they can call for support on an international community of scholars that have already had accounts of their living-educational-theories legitimated by universities throughout the world. Examples of Masters (2023) and Doctoral (2023) Living Educational Theory Research can be accessed from https://actionresearch.net/.

Literature Review

In traditional research, literature reviews are usually carried out to locate the research within a particular research paradigm and to identify limitations in the contemporary research that are overcome in the research. In Living Educational Theory Research practitioner critically and

creatively engage with a range of literature in order to draw insights to improve their learning, education, practice, research and the quality of their contributions to a global educational knowledgebase. For example, we draw on the idea of 'best-loved self'. Schwab (1954, 1978) created the concept and Craig (2013, 2020) developed it as a concept in teacher-research. We also recognise the uniqueness of each individual's expression of their 'best-loved self'. We believe that expressions of a 'best-loved self' includes an experience of being twice affirmed (Bernstein, 1971, p. 48). We use the response that Bernstein (ibid) gave to the question, 'What is it to produce something as a human being?' from the early writings of Marx. In producing something as a human being we twice affirm ourselves and the other. In our production of our living-educational-theory we objectify our individuality and uniqueness and in the course of the activity we enjoy an individual life and a life in the real world as a collaborating and participating member of various social formations. As another person makes use of accounts of our living-educational-theories, our product, we have the direct and conscious satisfaction that our work satisfies a human need and that it objectifies human nature with our values of human flourishing.

Methodology

We make a clear distinction between a method and a methodology. A method is a technique for gathering or analysing data. A methodology is constituted by the framework of principles which distinguish how the research was carried out. Most researchers follow Creswell's (2007) advocacy of choosing a methodology before the research begins. We continue to use insights from his excellent analysis of choosing among the five methodologies of Narrative Research, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Ethnography and Case Studies. Whitehead (2018) has added Autoethnography, Action Research and Phenomenography, to these methodologies. Where we differ from Creswell's approach to choosing between methodologies before the research begins, is in the recognition that a researcher generates their methodology in the course of exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve the educational influences in my professional practice with values of human flourishing?' and generating a valid account of their living-educational-theory. Such research includes the generation and sharing of valid, evidence-based and values-laden explanations by the practitioner-researcher for their educational, life-affirming and life-enhancing influence in their learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located.

We agree with Dadds and Hart (2001) about the importance of professional practitioners enacting 'methodological inventiveness' in their research. Because each individual has their unique constellation of values that constitute their values of human flourishing, and which they use as explanatory principles in their explanations for their educational influences in learning, the methodology that emerges as they create valid accounts of their living-educational-theories, constitutes part of their original contributions to knowledge.

Findings and Discussion

Some of the results of reaching out to people and communities to extend knowledge, understanding and practice of Living Educational Theory Research can be accessed from the homepage of living-posters (2023). For example, Chitanand's work in the Durban University of Technology, South Africa, illustrates the consequence of a person and community creating and co-creating knowledge, understanding and practice of Living Educational Theory Research as professional development and helping others do so too. (The research accounts can be accessed from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/dut23.pdf). Chitanand is a professional, educational practitioner realising and researching her values-laden responsibilities in real local and global worlds. Another example is provided by the evolving research of the

planning committee of the 4th International Conference for Transformative Education Research and Sustainable Development in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2024. (See their living-posters, which can be accessed from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/indonesiangp23.pdf

More results can be found in the archive of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs, 2008 – 2023). For example, Kahts-Kramer's (2024) paper, "From *"participation"* to "*transformative participation*": My living-educational-theory of Facilitating Transformative Continuing Professional Development." In her paper she gives an account of her research into her practice facilitating CPD in fields like PE, situated in low-resource schools in South African township communities. Through her creation of her living-educational-theory, *transformative participation* emerged as a core value. She concludes:

> Each distinct group in its specific context presents unique challenges, which in turn shape my facilitation skills and the development of my living-educational-theory centred on *transformative participation*. I hope that the insights I have shared may prove beneficial to colleagues embarking on facilitating transformative CPD…

Yet more results can be found among doctorates, which can be accessed from https://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml For example, Spiro (2008) illustrates how Living Educational Theory Research has empowered a professional practitioner to improve what they are doing in a university, which constituted their 'local real world' within which they sought to create educational knowledge as a contribution to a better 'global real world'. Qutoshi's thesis (2016) legitimated by Katmandu University, Nepal, **'**Creating living-educational-theory: a journey towards transformative teacher education in Pakistan'. Tattersall's thesis (2011) 'How am I generating a living theory of environmental activism with inclusionality?' was created over a period of 37 years, working and researching as an environmental activist within the cultural context of a 6th generation Tasmanian.

In an effort to do what we exhort others to do we have both produced archives of our findings from reaching out to people and communities with Living Educational Theory Research in the real world. Huxtable's archive can be accessed from http://www.spanglefish.com/mariessite/ . Whitehead's archive can be accessed from https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/writing.shtml In our academic monograph (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2024) on 'Living Educational Theory Research as an Epistemology for Practice: The Role of Values in Practitioners' Professional Development', we include the results of our reaching out to people and communities living and working in various cultures and contexts worldwide.

In Conclusion

We have stressed the importance of each one us accepting our educational responsibilities as professional practitioners and global citizens to ask, research and answer questions of the kind, "How do I improve my practice with values of human flourishing" and to contribute the knowledge generated to a global educational, values-laden knowledgebase all may benefit from. We conclude by encouraging you to access a 3:49 min video-clip from https://youtu.be/rGiG93m6EmM of Whitehead's response to the award of his D.Litt. degree by the University of Worcester on the 12th September 2023. He asks us all to remember the sacrifices on which our freedoms, to live worthwhile lives within democratic forms of governance, rest and concludes by inviting us each to contribute the results of our Living Educational Theory Research in the real world, reaching out to people and communities, to help bring into being local and global worlds where all can live worthwhile, productive and happy lives, and help others to do so too.

Access full presentation from
https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/carn2023/mhjw2023carn231023jwmhjw.pdf

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Early Childhood Home Visiting – a collaborative person-centred community approach:

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Introduction
Based on the Community Mothers Programme, the ABC 0-2 Years Home Visiting Programme has been developed and delivered collaboratively since 2015 in Dublin's inner city as part of the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme. A universal, prevention and early intervention programme, it has supported 500+ parents to care for their own health and wellbeing and that of their children. Working closely with Public Health Nurses (PHNs), it delivers key supports in relation to maternal and child diet, sleep, attachment, parenting and infant development. Participants reflect the diversity of the catchment area in terms of culture, accommodation, class, language, and ethnicity etc.

In 2019 the Community Mothers Programme was reviewed. Funding from Sláintecare Integration Fund and philanthropic donors led to the collaborative interagency development of an updated model, Community Families, which is replacing the ABC 0-2 Programme. Aligned with key policy developments, including First 5: The Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and Their Families (First 5) (DCEDIY, 2018), Community Families deliberately puts parents and children first, empowering them through trusted relationships with their Home Visitor and the built-in flexibility to respond to all families and their unique needs and circumstances. A key aim is to empower families to develop confidence as they grow and build their local peer support networks, accessing supports and services within their local community.

This paper explores the use of community action research and participatory action learning processes in the co-production of an early childhood home visiting (ECHV) programme at community and national level.

Methodology: Community Action Research
Collaboration is key to the work of the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland (NCI), a community-based educational initiative based within a third level institution in Dublin's Inner City. Acknowledging, respecting and utilising the expertise and experience within local families and communities is at the heart of our community action research and participatory action learning processes (Bleach, 2013a; 2016). Over the past sixteen years, the process has evolved from a simplistic 'plan, do, review' model (Lewin, 1946) into a complex restorative system, where 'multitudes of nodes, flows and connecting lines give rise to rhizomatic growth rather than clearly delineated systems' (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013: 32). Multiple ongoing 'dynamic conversations' (Schön, 1983) ensure the systematic involvement of children, parents, front-line service delivery staff, statutory agencies and policy makers in programme planning, implementation and evaluation.

ABC 0-2 Years Home Visiting Programme – Community Initiative
In 2014, NCI became the lead agency for the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme in Dublin Docklands and East Inner City. Using prevention and early intervention approaches, it aimed to work in partnership with families, practitioners, communities, and national stakeholders to deliver better outcomes for children and families living in areas where poverty is most deeply

entrenched (Tusla, 2024). Identification by local PHNs of the lack of supports for parents with children under 2 years led to the development of the ABC 0-2 Programme with implementation commencing in September 2015.

A universal, prevention-focused home visiting programme, the ABC 0-2 Programme supports families to improve children's (from pre-birth to two years of age) wellbeing, developmental and learning outcomes while increasing parental skills, knowledge and engagement. A trained Home Visitor works with the family to strengthen the parents' skills and self-esteem to enable them to believe in their own capabilities and skills when parenting. It employs a non-directive approach and encourages the parent as the child's first and best teacher.

Starting with 7 families in 2015, 549 families have engaged with the programme. Feedback has been very positive. Of the 391 parents who completed evaluation forms, 99% (N=386) found the programme useful/beneficial and were happy to recommend it to a friend. 98% (N=385) parents reported learning new approaches and ideas from their Home Visitor and felt confident in using these. In reporting specifically on what they learnt from engaging in the programme parents noted practical tips around playing and interacting with their baby including tummy time and sensory play, tips on supporting their child's development, and tips on caring for their baby including sleep and nutrition.

> *I learnt that it was great to trust my own instincts rather than following a rulebook. I learnt a lot about play and child development. I think the support offered was great. It was a very specific time to think about what is working or not.* [Parent, ELI 2016]

> *The home visitor was amazing. We really bonded with her, and our baby loved her. She gave us so much tips as we were new parents and always complimented us every time and in every way she can. I hope we can continue the relationship/ bond that we have formed with her and our family. Thank you, ELI. This is a great initiative. Keep it up![*Parent, ELI 2023]

Community Mothers/Families – National Initiative

The Community Mothers Programme began in Ireland in 1983. At its peak, it provided support to 3,500 families annually in 17 different communities across Ireland. By 2013, due to the worldwide economic recession hitting Ireland, only 12 sites remained, including our ABC 0-2 Programme. In 2019, a National Review of the Community Mothers Programme, conducted by the Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF) and the Community Foundation for Ireland with the active participation of the Health Service Executive (HSE), Tusla and the remaining 12 Community Mothers sites, was published (Brocklesby, 2019). A key recommendation was that a standardised national programme model should be developed along with a strategy to ensure the sustainability and future development and governance of the updated programme.

With funding from the Sláintecare Integration Fund and a private donor secured by NCI, the development of the standardised model and other key recommendations were progressed by the Tusla, HSE, KHF, NCI and the 7 remaining sites, using a participatory action learning approach, from early 2020, leading to the creation of Community Families. In 2022, the National Community Families Oversight and Support Group co-chaired by Tusla and HSE was established to support the transition of the original Community Mothers Programme sites, to Community Families and its continued roll out, quality assurance and future development. A readiness assessment was completed in 2023 (Broderick, 2023) with all 7 sites poised to fully transition to Community Families in 2024.

All the Community Mothers sites are active members of the the Home Visiting Alliance (HVA), which represents the collective national voice of early childhood home visiting (ECHV) in Ireland (Bleach & Brocklesby, 2023). 2022 was a significant year for home visiting with the publication of gov.ie - Supporting Parents: A National Model of Parenting Support Services (www.gov.ie) along with the progress on a national approach to home visiting as part of First 5 Strategy (DCEDIY, 2018) With support from the DCEDIY *What Works Sharing Knowledge Fund 2022*, the HVA completed a collaborative feasibility study on the replication, scaling and expansion of ECHV in Ireland (Brocklesby, 2023) Like with the Sláintecare Community Mothers Project, participatory action learning was the methodology used with the HVA members' expertise on replication, scaling and expansion complementing learning from abroad. Its key recommendation was the building of a viable infrastructure to enable ECHV to grow from its current 1% reach to 30% of the eligible population with clear benchmarks of how to ensure the whole child population would benefit.

Learning

Community action research and participatory action learning were key to developing the ABC 0-2 Programme, the Community Families model and Home Visiting Alliance. They supported continuous improvement and community building as well as developing our capacity for dialogue (Bleach 2013b). Structured reviews, consultative workshops, participant (including parents) interviews, observations and feedback were core methodologies. The continuous engagement and sustained commitment of key national and local organisations, including the DCEDIY, HSE, Tusla, KHF and Community Mothers sites was central to successful co-production. Over the past 10 years, there have been big changes at both local and national level.

At local level, early identification of children's wellbeing, health, welfare and developmental needs enables more children to reach their developmental milestones with more supports developed for those with additional needs. Parents' active engagement in supporting their children's wellbeing, development and learning ensures that they feel happier, more confident, informed and competent in their parenting role. Effective interagency structures, processes andpractice has resulted in increased uptake in child health clinic, immunisation and other appointments. It has also enabled us, as a community of learners in Dublin's Inner City, to collaboratively address emerging challenges such 2016 violent gangland feud, COVID-19, 2023 refugee crisis along with significant increases the number of children under 2 in homeless and emergency accommodation and/or on waiting lists for disability services.

At national level, ECHV is perceived as an essential local peer-led prevention and early intervention community lifeline for children and parents. It has been aligned with key Irish Government policies, including First 5, Sláintecare and Young Ireland, and incorporated in to Tusla's Parenting Support Strategy and HSE's Women's and Infants, Health and Wellbeing, including Disability, Mental Health and Healthy Childhood Programmes. The Community Families Programme is ready for implementation. Through the First Five Strategy (DCEDIY, 2018), we are hopeful that a publicly funded ECHV national model will be agreed with Community Families scaled up across the country.

Working with real people within real social systems is challenging (Bleach, 2013b). People do not necessarily act as you wish, and things do not always go according to plan. Finding the time and energy to engage at local and national level was challenging for all participants, especially in a fraught environment of changing policy, structures and contexts. Understanding where people were coming from, the different mind-sets and political interests along with how they

were experiencing working together and how they were processing and interpreting that experience (Coghlan and Brannick, 2001) was critical.

Capacity building through training, consultative workshops and communities of practice was important. Upskilling in scaling programmes and emerging theories on child development, infant mental health and trauma informed practice enabled us to innovate and incorporate these improvements into policy, programmes and practice. Bringing national and local stakeholders together built relationships of trust and enabled us all to think differently, act differently, and relate to one another differently (Kemmis, 2009) in the best interests of children, parents and families.

Conclusion

Change is a complex, analytical, political and cultural process of challenging and changing the core beliefs, structure and strategy of a community (Pettigrew, 1987). This project is an example of a future-orientated policy-focused prevention and early intervention initiative, where practice and policy intersected in the collaborative strategic planning and transformation of an ECHV programme. Aligned with national policy, it highlights the importance of dedicated champions, infrastructures, and resources at national and local level to ensure sustained quality implementation, continued programme efficacy and long-term positive outcomes for children, parents and families. It also highlights the value and complexity of community action research at local level and participatory action learning at national level.

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Common worlds ways of thinking, being, doing, and knowing with/in self-study research with/in the real world:

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My doctoral research explores the ways in which my relationship with the outdoors is entangled and entwined with my practice as both a teacher educator and researcher. My study is situated within a common worlds framework underpinned by the concepts of relationality and kinship. Tracing the ways in which 'particular kinds of entangled … relations produce certain ways of being' (Taylor & Pacini Ketchabaw, 2019, p.2) requires innovative methodologies (Hodgins, 2019) in self-study. My presentation at CARN 2023 shared some of the ways in which my use of a common worlds framework expands and broadens my thinking, being, doing and knowing that informs the approaches I take in my self-study.

What are common worlds?

Common Worlds is a term borrowed from Bruno Latour, who uses it to challenge and question the nature / culture binary. He posits both nature and culture should be 'best thought about together – as an imbroglio of human and non-human, living and inert, geographic and engineered, discursive and material relations' (Taylor, 2013, p.70).

Latour maintains the importance of recognising the 'making [of] worlds is not limited to humans' (Tsing, 2015, p.22). Non-human and more-than-human materialities should also be acknowledged alongside humans in the (re)constructions of knowledge and reality, with all having shared agency. This collective agency enables thinking beyond the view that it is only humans who are able to exercise agency with non-humans being passive recipients. Instead, common worlds thinking recognises worlds come into being through the everyday relationships, entanglements, and intra-actions between different materialities and bodies (Latour, 2004; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019).

Several authors agree that agency within common worlds can never be exclusively human, this agency is 'dispersed, relational, collective and interactive' (Taylor & Pacini Ketchabaw, 2019, p.2). Donna Haraway identifies how 'no species, not even our own … acts alone; assemblages of organic species and of abiotic actors make history' (2016, p.100). Isabelle Stengers (2012) highlights how collective thinking takes place in the 'presence of nonhuman others to generate common accounts of the world' (cited by Taylor & Pacini Ketchabaw, 2019, p.15).

Relationality and relationships

I believe our ways of being and becoming, doing, knowing, and thinking can be, and are, both dominated and restricted by the relationships we are part of. This includes our relationships with other humans, non-humans, and more-than-human bodies and materialities, such as objects, things, memories, emotions, places and spaces. As Shawn Wilson reminds us, it is these relationships that form our realities:

> When you open your eyes, you can see all of the things that are around you. What you see is their physical form, but you realize that this form is really just the web of relationships that have taken on a

> familiar shape. Every individual thing you see around you is really just a huge knot – a point where thousands and millions of relationships come together. The relationships come to you from the past, from the present and from your future. This is what surrounds us, and what forms us, our world, our cosmos and our reality. We could not be without being in relationship with everything that surrounds us and is within us. (2008, p.76)

In relation to my study, I believe these relationships are part of our everyday actions, identities, and practices, forming and (re)forming realities and worlds.

Spaces and places of practice: teaching

Figure 5: example from my teaching practice (shared with permission)

With regards to teaching practices, teaching and learning occurs and is created and (re)created in spaces and places that are assemblages of different materialities and bodies. Looking at figure 1 as an example from my own practice, different materialities include: *humans* – tutors and students; *non-humans* – plants, trees, animals, buildings, mud, resources, artefacts; *more-than-humans* – emotions, memories, feelings, affects. Looking back at the photo of that session I smile remembering the friendship between myself and my colleague, between the students, between us all. I recall the sounds from chatter and laughter as students worked in their small groups and the noises from other buildings nearby. I can feel the cool breeze and autumnal sunshine.

As Snaza writes, 'classrooms are not just spaces where ideas are aired, shared critiqued and debated; they are sites where affects emerge, circulate and enter into conflict. (And this circulation far exceeds the human)' (2021, p.113). Teaching can be recognised as 'knowledge encounters … [that] swell with affects beyond – or even before – words' (Dernikos et al., 2020, p.16). Knowledge itself can be created through dialogical interactions between voices that are not only embodied in humans but also in others such as 'texts, movements, artefacts, experiments' (Chappell et al., 2019, p.298).

My self in self-study

Akinbode writes, 'being a teacher involves more than just the technicalities of planning, teaching and assessing; it is inextricably linked with personal experience, and involves body and emotion' (2017, p.226). So taking my common worlds stance, who am I in this self-study? (see figure 2). I'm the partner of Mike, the daughter of Liz and George, the granddaughter of Mary and Dryden.

Figure 6: who am I in this self-study?

I'm a lecturer in primary education and have been a primary school teacher. I've been an undergraduate student and now a PhD student. My relationship with the outdoors is entangled with the experiences I have had / have. Birdwatching with grandad when I was younger, walking in the Lakes with Mike, rabbit spotting on the dunes in Northumberland as a child, carrying grandad's binoculars and listening to his stories. Looking back on photos, writing about my experiences, reinforces how 'each human is a heterogenous compound of wonderfully vibrant, dangerously vibrant matter' (Bennett, 2010, p.2). Life and existence are 'neither exclusively human' (Braidotti, 2019, p.45) nor 'an individual affair' (Barad, 2007, p.ix). Within my common worlds framework, thinking about who I am means thinking beyond myself as a bounded complete individual, I am 'not [a] thing in the world, in space and time, but relational phenomena – a spacetimemattering' (Murris, 2022, p.32), living in (as Madonna sang) a material world. That I too am an assemblage of human, non-human, and more-than-human materialities.

So, how are common worlds and relationality applied in my self-study research?

Choosing to use self-study for my PhD provides me with a critical space in which to carry out an 'intentional and systematic inquiry into [my] practice' (Dinkleman, 2003, p.8), affording opportunities to 'capture, unpack and portray the complexities of teaching and learning about teaching' (Loughran, 2005, p.13), focusing on the wider aspects of my identity alongside my role as a teacher educator. Self-study is also a 'means to think about, to understand and develop my practice' (Ragoonaden, 2015, p.82) through a critical and reflexive exploration of the contexts of my practices alongside my beliefs, values, and viewpoints. However, the notion of self-study implies a focus on the self. My use of a common worlds framework and focusing on relationality means that my gaze is much broader than on myself and considers the different materialities and bodies that are part of the contexts and worlds that I am part of and study.

A relational ethico~onto~episto~methodo~logy

Expanding self-study through my common worlds framework and the concept of relationality requires 'exploring the relational character' of my common world, alongside its 'continuities, fluxes and 'becomings'' (Fox & Alldred, 2021, p.3). This entails relational approaches that allow for *noticing* (Tsing, 2015). That is attending to moments where 'capacities, affective flows, sense-abilities and relational response-ability are enfolded in an entangled connectivity across space and time' (Taylor, 2018, p.94), where 'understanding, thinking, observing and theorizing [are] practices of, and as part of the world in which we have our being' (Barad, 2007, p.133).

It is this 'entanglement of matter and meaning' (Barad in Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p.50), the power of matter, and the ways in which it materialises in my everyday life and practices that requires the acknowledgment of collective agency of all bodies. I feel it is impossible to ignore

the relationships that we are part of, the webs of relationships from our pasts, presents, and futures. Those relationships that include not only humans but other-than-human materialities that 'surround[s] us, and what form us, our world, our cosmos and our reality' (Wilson, 2008, p.76). This requires acknowledging the 'thingly call' (Bennett, 2010, PAGE), agency, animacy and vibrancy of the material world with/in my self-study.

A common worlds framework values the 'messiness, co-existence and entanglement of each agent' (Harwood & Collier, 2017, p.338), recognising that all bodies are independent yet mutually intertwined, each being performative and contributing to the generation of knowledge. My self-study is underpinned by relationality and kinship, alongside the additional concepts of embodiment, dialogue, reflexivity, and reciprocity. Each of these inform my ontology, epistemology, methodology, and ethics, which I consider to also be entangled and entwined. My ways of thinking, being and becoming, doing, and knowing have blurred and fuzzy boundaries, so methods, analysis, impact, and theory are not 'brought in and applied' to my study, but are 'lived throughout the process' and beyond (Hodgins, 2019, p.5). As Barad states, 'discursive practices and material phenomenon do not stand in a relationship of externality to each other; rather the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity' (2007, p.119). This has led me to taking an ethico~onto~episto~methodo~logical approach to my work. This entangled ethico~onto~episto~methodo~logy is underpinned by my common worlds framework and relationality between all materialities and bodies in the making of realities. As Barad states:

> Practices of knowing cannot be fully claimed as human practices, not simply because we use nonhuman elements in our practices but because knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part … We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are *of* the world. (2007, p.185)

Throughout my work, I *re-turn* (Barad, 2014) to experiences and events, to concepts and ideas, to people and bodies known and unknown. These re-turns are not simple repetitions or going back to a past that was, instead they allow for the 'turning it over again and again' (Barad, 2014, p.168). It is in these re-turns that I question and (re)question, frame and (re)frame ideas and concepts. Repetition and re-turning is a 'productive process that produces variation' (Parr, 2010, p.225) where new and different understandings may be generated, where the 'beginnings of order in chaos may occur' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.311). In these re-turns, the threads of my self-study loop and twist back on themselves, weaving forwards and backwards, merging and tangling, forming this relational knot. This has led the creation of my **relational ethico~onto~episto~methodo~logical knot** (see figure 3).

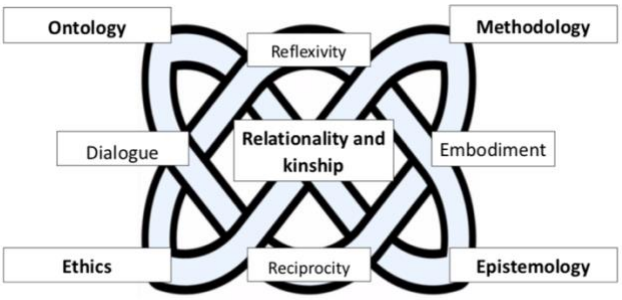

Figure 7: Relational ethico~onto~episto~methodo~logical knot

My relational knot is an example of a Celtic knot, which are complete loops with no beginnings or endings. Celtic knots such as these have been recognised as a representation of the Celtic belief in the interconnectedness of life, and as a symbol of friendship, relationships, and connection. For me, this knot represents the relationality and kinship between the many materialities and bodies that are entangled in the web of relationships with/in my study and my common world. In a similar manner to Nico Carpentier's discursive-material knot (2017), I use my Celtic knot to acknowledge the shared agency and generative potential and capacities of all materialities and bodies in my common world, and the ways in which each are 'mutually implicated in the infolding emergence of the world' (MacLure, 2013, p.660).

Relational ethics

Ethics should be reflected through our ways of being, doing, knowing, and thinking. Borrowing from Haraway (2016), I use concept of *response-ability*. Being response-able 'involves broadening the gaze from the human at the centre of the enquiry and instead attend to human, non-human and more-than-human' (Albin-Clark et al., 2021). Response-ability acknowledges the capacity and potentiality of others to respond, shifting away from the human-centric notion of ethics where the human speaks and acts for the other.

With regards to my common worlds framework, reality is composed of diverse communities, bodies and materialities, both mysterious and familiar. Humans and other-than-humans are always already entangled 'primeval kin' (Taylor & Pacini Ketchabaw, 2019, p.5) and we are all kin within the family of life on Earth' (Rose, 2022, p.11). Ethical considerations in my study then cannot, and should not, be a universal one size fits all abstract approach. They need to be situated and appropriate to specific spacetimematterings (Barad, 2007) with all materialities and bodies. Ethics, then 'emerges as the moment-by-moment material doings which activate matterings which includes more than the human' (Taylor, 2018, p.81). They become a 'matter of relations, engagements, and entanglements … [becoming] materialised in and through activations, attunements and instantiations' (ibid.).

Writing to it

In my self-study, I make use of narrative approaches to tell the stories of my practice and of my relationship with the outdoors. 'Threading past, present and future through one another' allows for 'an integrative depth of self and place [to be] woven' (Philips & Bunda, 2018, p.37). Writing has been recognised as a way of attending to our senses (Etherington, 2004), a way of gaining insights from data and literature. Yet through the dominance of representation, writing can place boundaries and set hierarchies between bodies, straiting ways of being, doing, thinking, and knowing. Throughout my PhD, I would find myself nodding or shaking my head in disagreement as I read or listened to their ideas, being affected by their work. As my own thoughts fizzed and bubbled, I would feel a sense of wonder, curiosity, surprise… However, at times when trying to write, I found that traditional academic forms of writing left me feeling separated and disjointed from these feelings and affects, from the words and thoughts of my self and others. I often found I needed to break away from the main flow of my writing to explore another idea, to ask questions, to ponder, to wonder.

Writing for me is much more than words on a page. Deleuze & Guattari suggest that writing 'has nothing to do with signifying … [but] has everything to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come' (1987, p.4-5). Writing should be considered as 'an event! … an opening' (Truman, 2022, p.5), a 'creative act' (Dolphijn, 2021, p.87), a way of 'bringing concepts to life' (Wyatt & Gale, 2018, p.123), an approach to inquiry with its own affective force and capacity to 'produce different knowledge and producing knowledge differently' (St Pierre, 1997, p.175).

Throughout my work, this grappling with, pondering and exploring ideas, walking around concepts is (re)presented by *blue-pen writing*. This writing, as the name suggests, is in a different colour to the main body of my work. It is interspersed between paragraphs, within sentences, often interruption the flow of the main body of text (see figure 4). These blue-pen interruptions reinforce the notion that my thinking, doing, knowing, and being / becoming is entangled with/in the worlds of my study and separate; *a part* of the world being studied, not *apart* (Barad, 2007). The blue-pen writing also enables me to (re)present my thinking out loud, the intra-actions I have with different bodies and materialities, 'provoking relationality, to feel and know others' (Philips & Bunda, 2018, p.57), enabling the 'forming of new connections, new convergences … new ideas [to] come about and new thoughts to emerge' (Dolphijn, 2021, p.26).

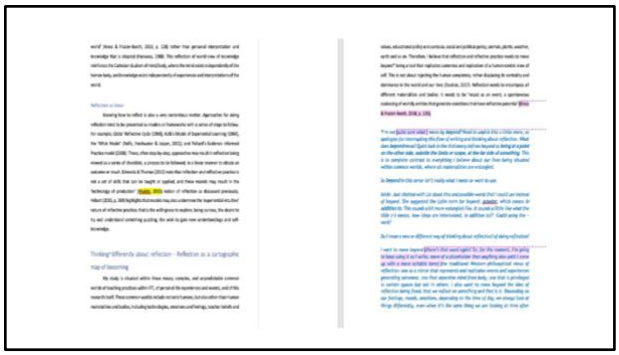

Figure 8: example of blue-pen writing

Conclusion

As discussed in my presentation and in this writing, my self-study is much more than the study of my self and the contexts I am part of. It is situated beyond human centric communities of practice, humanistic conceptions of relationships, and the notion of the self being a bounded human individual. Instead, taking this relational stance in my work means that thinking, being, doing, and knowing is re-situated to not only acknowledge but to also value the entanglement and agency of other-than-human materialities. The liveliness of all bodies is attended to, with dialogue being reconceptualised more broadly than its traditional humanistic connotation so that the voices of all; human and other-than-human, are heard and valued.

The following definition by Hamilton & Pinnegar encapsulates my common worlds and relational approach to self-study:

> The study of one's self, one's actions, one's ideas, as well as the not-self. It is autobiographical, historical, cultural and political…it draws on one's life, but it is more than that. Self-study also involves a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known, and ideas considered. (1998, p.236)

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Reading Rita: an investigation into the ways mature students negotiate scholarly 'becoming'!

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Introduction

This research project follows an autoethnographical methodology previously employed using a film/literary text to structure a broader investigation, mirroring the approach taken in the writers' undergraduate dissertation, which centered around Sillitoe's "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning." Here, the focus shifts to Willy Russell's "Educating Rita," serving as a thematic framework for investigating the experiences of adult learners. This study aligns with Vicky Duckworth's work on learning trajectories, emphasising the importance of allowing learners to articulate their own experiences. Rita's journey in the context of lifelong education reflects aspirations for self-improvement and challenges deeply ingrained within societal myths, particularly the myth of education as social salvation. "Educating Rita" is positioned as a deliberate myth, designed to disrupt conventional assumptions about education, showcasing the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between teachers and learners. The research seeks to validate and explore transformative possibilities within the lifelong learning journey focusing on mature students.

Autoethnographical Approaches

"… one of the approaches that acknowledges …the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist."
Ellis et al's (2011)

Embracing an autoethnographic approach, the researcher immerses into participants' educational journeys, prioritising vulnerability and individuality. Balancing rigor with creativity, autoethnography provides a multifaceted methodology that seeks accessibility and connection through authentic storytelling. Ellis et al.'s (2011) 'descriptive' framework informs the study, intertwining personal narratives with cultural insights. The term 'analytic autoethnography,' as articulated by Anderson (2006), underscores the researcher's commitment to theoretical understanding within the cultural milieu. Following Wright's perspective (2014), the essence of autoethnography lies in sharing experiences resonating with the studied culture. Rejecting conventional epistemologies, the research aligns with the belief in the authenticity of evocative autoethnography. Peim (2018) accentuates the importance of theorising in research, while Muncey (2010) encapsulates autoethnography as the portrayal of self within a social context. 'Educating Rita' serves as a crucial reference, offering insights and serving as a touchstone for participants to engage with the project.

Literature Review

The researcher conducted a literature review to explore the historical context of working-class children's struggles in education, drawing on Morris (1963), McNair (1944), and Butler (1943). They highlighted the sincerity in these reports compared to recent government offering. The relevance of Willy Russell's 'Educating Rita' was emphasized, intending to analyse the film's portrayal of education practices and policies. The researcher identified key theoretical frameworks, including Bourdieu's (1984) 'Distinction,' Freire's (2017) 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed,' Diana Reay's work (2006, 2017), Biesta's contributions, Peim's (2018) 'The Myths of Education,' and Hooks' emphasis on education as the practice of freedom.

The literature review also referenced Ormerod and Francis (2010), focusing on addressing gaps in working-class education and providing autonomy to the oppressed. Clarke's (2020) examination of tensions in education policies and the intertwining of education with fantasy was discussed, along with its connection to Russell's portrayal of Rita's struggles. The pivotal scene from 'Educating Rita,' where books are burned, was highlighted, symbolising the challenges faced by mature students in higher learning institutions. The literature review serves as a foundation for the researcher's exploration of education and social class dynamics in their study.

Participants Responses

The initial plan to interview four "Rita's" using a detailed participant data collection questionnaire faced delays and unfulfilled promises. Despite efforts to motivate participants, including personal challenges faced by the researcher, responses were not forthcoming. Recognising the need for a more efficient approach, the researcher revised the questionnaire to include short and concise questions, widening the scope to include male participants.

Facing resistance and excuses, the researcher decided to streamline the process by using social media platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp to gather responses. This approach aimed to facilitate quick and honest feedback. Some participants struggled with the concept, and one was excluded due disclosing that they were inebriated when completing the task. The decision to employ digital platforms proved effective, with responses obtained promptly. Despite challenges of the pandemic, the researcher aimed to capture unfiltered opinions, highlighting the impact of education on participants' perception of the value of their honest thoughts.

The four questions proposed to each participant were as follows:

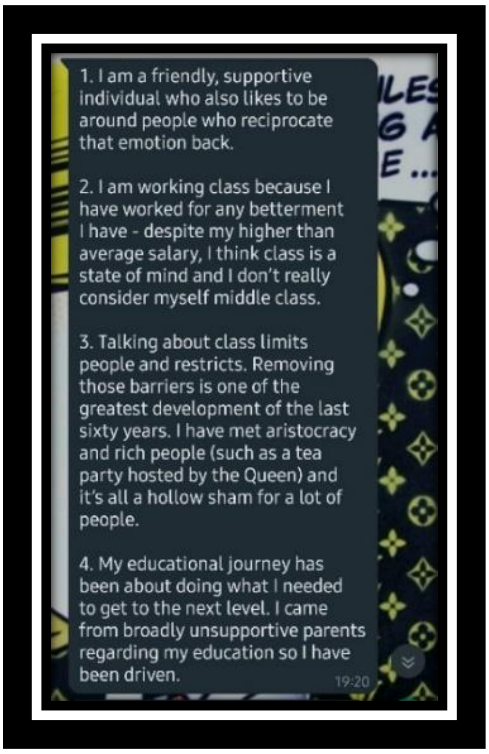
1. If I were to ask you to describe yourself, what would you say?
2. What class do you consider yourself?
3. Does class matter?
4. How would you describe your educational journey?

The researcher assigned pseudonyms to participants for confidentiality and adopted an informal data collection approach to ensure comfort, honesty, and minimal pressure. The intention was to understand participants' thoughts without influencing their responses. Participants, some known to the researcher and others only online, were drawn from various locations worldwide. The selection process was purposive and opportunistic, with ethical considerations communicated to participants before sending out questions.

The researcher emphasised transparency, both in encouraging participants to be open and in disclosing the ethical standpoint of the study. Despite multiple conversations about the researcher's course, participants did not inquire about the researcher's personal answers, aligning with the goal of minimising influence on their responses.

The researcher provided personal responses to the four questions, describing themselves as an introverted extrovert, socially awkward, music lover, passionate about social justice and education, a fan of Agatha Christie, a feminist communist with disabilities, and a black woman. They identified as working class but emphasised that class is not crucial to them, acknowledging its societal impact. Reflecting on their educational journey, they recounted experiences of being dyslexic, facing stereotyping and racism, encountering prejudicial teachers, and ultimately finding encouragement and support at the University of Wolverhampton. The personal narrative serves as a context for understanding the researcher's perspective within the broader study.

Examples of Participants Response



Conclusion

The researcher decided to combine responses and create a dynamic impression of the results using a visual representation, labelled as fig.4, highlighting keywords from participants. An accompanying mp4 link features John Lennon's "Working Class Hero" to provide context and commentary. The song, originating from Lennon's first solo album, reflects his own working-class experiences and serves as a metaphor for the researcher's approach in seeking the essence of participants' stories.

The song's lyrics, particularly the refrain "a working-class hero is something to be," are discussed in the context of the fantasy of meritocracy. The researcher draws on Berardi's observations in 2019, emphasizing how meritocracy can undermine social solidarity, turn intellectual abilities into tools for economic competition, and erode autonomy in the learning process. Berardi's critique aligns with Lennon's implicit criticism of societal expectations and emotional struggles. The researcher notes the persistence of suspicion that Berardi is correct in asserting that accepting meritocracy means relinquishing autonomy in the learning process and subjecting one's formation evaluation entirely to external judgment. The discussion highlights the personal and emotional aspects of Lennon's lyrics, resonating with the ongoing challenges of emotional punishment faced by individuals today.

These words are powerfully and alarmingly relevant more than fifty years later:

As soon as you're born, they make you feel small
By giving you no time instead of it all
'Til the pain is so big you feel nothing at all
A working class hero is something to be
A working class hero is something to be
They hurt you at home and they hit you at school
They hate you if you're clever and they despise a fool
'Til you're so fucking crazy you can't follow their rules
A working class hero is something to become.

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Guilt and responsibility - Action research principles as driving forces for student-led social justice university work:

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Introduction

Action research is driven by a commitment to social justice principles of collaboration, co-construction of knowledge and action for positive change. A current issue in higher education (HE) is how to ensure belonging and success for all students, and specifically, how to recognize and represent those students with protected characteristics (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, Moore-Cherry, 2015; Burke, Crozier & Misiaszek, 2017; Cook-Sather, 2018). Creating spaces in which to explore what is possible through staff: student engagement with issues of power sharing provides universities with considerable benefits and enables student voice to be valued (Wicks & Reason, 2009; Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011; Mercer-Mapstone, L., Dvorakova, S.L., Matthews, K.E., Abbot, S., Cheng, B., Felten, P., Knorr, K., Marquis, E., Shammas, R. and Swaim, K., 2017, Shosh, 2019). This ambition in practice, however, is not without its challenges. As Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in my academic School, I recruited students to lead a "Curriculum Task Force" (CTF) to review modules for inclusivity and accessibility, drawing on their lived experience and insights. Enabling students to be leaders gives rise to a range of tensions, not least how the formal staff-student interactions are disrupted and challenged (Giroux, 2020; Matthews & Dollinger, 2022). All students in the School were invited to express interest in the "Task Force" role, however the email specified that I was keen to recruit those students with protected characteristics (Equality Act, 2010), and those students who were first in their family to attend university. Matthews and Dollinger rightly challenge the status quo in which only those students with the time and the resources can benefit from these extra-curricular opportunities (2022). Therefore, after the first-year pilot, students were paid for their work, and along with this gentle targeting, I successfully recruited a representative group of students.

Curriculum Task Force (CTF)

Our CTF was part of a wider School initiative to embed student voice and ownership into EDI work so that this became the norm, and knowledge and understanding about developing student-led EDI work could be shared throughout the School and Faculty. The aim of the CTF was to evaluate 3-4 modules per academic year; how these were evaluated was up to each group of CTF students, each year, drawing on the evaluation templates used by students who participated in the previous year, and examples of similar work undertaken in other universities.[3] Students chose to focus on the inclusivity and accessibility of module content, resources and modes of assessment, and assess this via a) the online learning platform and b) an interview with the module convenor.

Modules are recruited each year via School bulletins, EDI board meetings and word of mouth. Recruitment was challenging in the first year of the initiative, but the positive experiences of participating staff and the quality of the student feedback ensured that there is no longer a shortage of volunteers. The CTF staff coordinator has the remit to explain the process, share the previous year's reports, check in regularly and nudge colleagues or CTF students if reports or responses are not forthcoming.

[3] UCL and Kingston Universities

The CTF is in its fourth year and, in that time, has recruited more than 30 students from a range of backgrounds and with a diversity of protected characteristics. Students have shared their experiences of leading this work and the expertise they developed in many fora, including international as well as internal conferences, Faculty teaching and learning colloquia, and as part of staff Away Days. This has led to increased confidence, further paid opportunities, development of leadership and communication skills, and has built trust between students and staff. However, as with any activity which devolves power, it has not been without its challenges.

Student-led university social justice work

Student-led work or study is described in various ways. The term "student voice" is liberally employed but can be confusing. Does student voice denote student representation (a leadership or governance activity): or does it suggest student partnership (a teaching and learning activity)? And whose voices are we including? (Matthews and Dollinger, 2022). There is no homogeneous student voice: indeed, the aim of our student-led EDI work was to draw on the expertise and lived experience of multiple voices and perspectives to ensure that our School culture was inclusive and accessible to all. Therefore, our EDI work relates to student representation via leadership. However, the students' work was focused on curriculum review, so therefore, according to Matthews and Dollinger, it also qualifies as a teaching and learning activity, or student partnership (2022).

Students as Partners (SaP) is most successful when it is: a focus on partnership activities that are small scale, at the undergraduate level, extracurricular, and focused on teaching and learning enhancement (Mercer-Mapstone, L., Dvorakova, S.L., Matthews, K.E., Abbot, S., Cheng, B., Felten, P., Knorr, K., Marquis, E., Shammas, R. and Swaim, K., 2017). Our student-led EDI work was a paid extra-curricular initiative, which contributed to evaluating teaching and learning via module review. In her research into student-staff partnership work, Cook-Sather shows the empowerment students feel when operating as actors in their education, rather than being "acted upon". Cook-Sather refers to this type of student partnership work as "students as learners and teachers" (SaLT). Despite the equity inherent in the idea of students bringing their experiences of learning to the evaluation of modules, there were multiple systemic barriers to staff engagement with or validation of this work – challenging the very idea of "students as partners".

One significant barrier in this type of student-led social justice university work was the blurring of staff:student boundaries, or what Cook-Sather describes as "liminality" or "in-betweenness" in which "the role boundaries blur as teachers become learners, and learners become teachers" (Cook-Sather, 2010, p560). When students are provided with the opportunity to "become" teachers, this offers a re-positioning of their knowledge and expertise and a potential unsettling for the university teachers as they navigate new staff-student interactions. This can be confusing for students as they negotiate their dual identities of teacher and learner: expert and student. It can also be alienating to staff unfamiliar with collaborative teaching, learning and leadership. Staff can be cynical about the benefits students can bring to curriculum review work, underestimating their ability to contribute in a meaningful way, or interpreting student experiences as an unhelpful contribution (Fenton and Baumann, 2013; Bovill, 2014; Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., Felten, P., Millard, L. and Moore-Cherry, N., 2016). Staff may also feel that any drive for student-staff collaboration or partnership is simply a tick-box exercise (Louth, Walsh & Goodwin-Smith, 2019).

Action Research Principles
Implicit in the ethos of student-led EDI work are ideas of staff and students working equitably together, co-creation of ideas, initiatives, or policy, and the aim of changing thinking and/or practices for the better. The action research principles of collaboration, co-construction of knowledge and action for positive social change connected directly to the rationale for co-developing this area of EDI work, although these principles were more of an underpinning resonance, rather than an explicit commitment.

Collaboration aims to bring together multiple perspectives and lived experiences and, in so doing, dismantle structural or other barriers which have prevented a collaborative approach. Collaboration is variously described as "bringing people and groups together for a common purpose" (Goulet, Krentz and Christiansen, 2003, p.325), "mutual growth and respect occur among all participants" (Tikunoff and Ward, 1983, p.466) and "understanding the work of one another" (Clark, Moss, Goering, Herter, Lamar, Leonard, Robbins, Russell, Templin and Wascha, 1996, p.196). As Jesney will attest (below), collaboration is often the intent, but less easily the reality of student-led initiatives.

Co-construction of knowledge was possibly the most crucial aspect of the CTF, in that we were aiming for the development of a shared understanding derived from the students' lived experiences, which would be shaped by the students into learning for teaching staff. In dialogue with the module convenors and amongst each other, the students were aiming for "reciprocal exchange of ideas and practices" (Orland-Barak and Tillema, 2006, p.6). This highlights the challenges of adhering to principles, as the power dynamics of our inter-relationships within the HE structures caused friction and discomfort for both students and for staff at times.
Finally, the aim of the CTF was to initiate and embed sustainable change which links to the third principle: action for (positive) social change. Action is, of course, a central tenet of Action Research and is both the aim of the research process and the research process itself. Actions leading to change can be personal or global: for example, activism and action about a local issue can lead to global change, while researching into one's own practice can lead to personal change which can be transformational as well as rewarding (Maguire 1987; Kemmis 2008; Fine, 2016). In the case of the CTF the aim was for widespread (Faculty-wide) impact, whereas the students found that they had evolved and changed in their perspectives and their understandings, through their participation in the CTF.

A student perspective - Jesney
My motivation to join the Curriculum Task Force (CTF) stemmed from the desire to address some of the gaps in the curriculum and (un)conscious bias I had observed thanks to my own intersectionality. Before me, only an aunt on my mother's (White British) side had gone to university. I grew up attending schools in Sheffield and Dronfield and, as a girl of mixed White and Black Caribbean background, my lived experience differed very much to that of my peers. These educational and social experiences are exactly what qualified me to become a spokesperson for those with whom I share protected characteristics. Through my participation in the CTF I hoped to address the barriers and inadequacies I had faced in early academic and social spheres.

The CTF aimed to assess how accessible and inclusive the modules of the Cultures, Languages and Area Studies (CLAS) School were. Before writing up our final report for each module, we intended to undertake three key activities:

- conduct an initial evaluation of the module and its content using the teaching and learning platform (Moodle),
- meet with the convenor(s) to discuss their module,

- interview students taking the module to gain a better understanding of how it was delivered and what their experience was like.

However our initial three-step plan was not as simple as we had first thought. During three years of participation in the CTF, we were not able to capture even one single piece of feedback from a student of any of the modules we evaluated. We were able to collect convenor feedback with relative ease; the convenors knew that they would be questioned about their modules at some point during the process and, because they volunteered to participate, I assume that they were aware of this fact.

Another challenge presented at the outset of the project was the Coronavirus pandemic: virtual meetings and social media group chats created a sense of distance between the members of the team, at least in my experience. I knew that there were real people behind the icons and screen names, but it did not truly register until the team members, some veteran and others new, met when year three of the CTF began. When this meeting took place, it felt like reuniting with old friends. Having achieved so much together and fostered such a wonderful sense of community in our shared goals, it was easy to translate this into chemistry and was conducive to a supportive and enjoyable professional environment.

One consequence of working on the CTF I did not anticipate was the impact it would have on my view of the modules I studied, or even lessons I had been taught prior to my undergraduate degree. I began to consider whether the full picture was being presented to me, whether I was privy to enough perspectives, and how much deeper I would need to delve into each topic to know 'enough'. It is not possible to entirely dissect any given text or concept - mostly for logistical reasons - but it is possible to adjust what is deemed to be 'necessary knowledge'. Sometimes the content relegated to a 'recommended reading' list could be exactly what is required to make a module more inclusive and relatable.

When preparing to present our CTS findings, we found the themes of guilt and responsibility utterly inescapable: I felt guilty for potentially misrepresenting my peers, but responsible for making some positive changes to the curriculum. I felt somewhat guilty that narrowing the pool of CTF recruits only to those with protected characteristics was exclusive but was equally determined to platform the voices of those who would most benefit from diversifying the curriculum. I also grappled with intense guilt in the final months of my degree as I seriously considered stopping my EDI work. I was part of another student leadership initiative alongside the CTF and thought that, should I have to sacrifice something, it could not be my university course. I expressed my concerns to the CTF staff coordinator, who agreed that I should not sacrifice my degree for these projects, and that my dedication to social justice was not determined by my involvement in these projects. The upsetting thought of 'giving up' on the EDI work made me persevere, and I understood the importance of delegating tasks to other team members and sharing the workload.

One of the biggest hurdles facing the CTF was retention of contributing students. At the beginning of each academic year, we had more applicants to join the CTF than the last, but the workload became heavier as time passed and group members stopped engaging with the CTF to prioritise their studies and other commitments. This of course meant less representation, as fewer voices were being platformed. Offering feedback from a limited pool of student voices seemed counterproductive, but it also could not be helped if students did not see the project through. I recognised the patterns of inactivity and began to delegate tasks to ensure that we met our deadlines and provided what was expected of us. Similarly to acting as a Student Partner, adopting a leadership role within the CTF (which was a 'level playing field')

felt almost unfair at times. Prior to my involvement in the project I did not foresee myself becoming a student 'leader' of any sort, but this is what I became. I did not want to commandeer our meetings or outshine any of my peers - I simply wanted to complete the work we had set out to do, and sensed that this would not take place at a good pace until we had come up with a plan as a collective. My intentions as a self-appointed student leader were ensuring that every other member of the team managed to voice their opinions, often by asking them directly what they thought about one of the module evaluation criteria or which admin-related task they wanted to do. It can be difficult to volunteer these thoughts unprompted sometimes, but I was happy to encourage my peers to express their thoughts if they were willing to share them.
A personal fault I began to address whilst working with the CTF was my hesitation to ask for help. I saw this as failure and preferred to overwhelm myself instead of 'caving' and looking for somebody to intervene. I am still in the process of unlearning the notion that accepting help is negative but am very grateful for the head start the CTF gave me. The abilities to accept and provide support are not mutually exclusive, and I am proud to have recognised this and am making strides to repair this counterproductive mentality. When our collaborative efforts increased, our rapport as a team did, too.

Even so, I found the student-led approach was something of a double-edged sword. We had the freedom to evaluate and comment on the modules as we saw fit, but the team and I realised that we essentially had too much freedom and not enough guidance. We raised this issue and were met with support and understanding, and from that point onwards we had more structure and intention at the core of our work. I understand the rationale behind giving us so much autonomy in the execution of the project; we were fortunate to be trusted with this opportunity and, fortunately, when requested, were provided with the direction we lacked.
As a student agent of social justice work in a university setting, I felt nothing but support from my peers, with whom I worked closely, and from the academics who cheered us on while we assessed their colleagues' work. I felt that our feedback was appreciated and well-received, and that any constructive criticism we had to offer would be applied to the module as soon as was convenient. However, I was also skeptical that the convenor interview and feedback stage was only successful because each convenor had to volunteer their module for evaluation. I recall one convenor being particularly evasive and difficult to pin down for an interview - virtually or otherwise. The meeting did eventually take place on Teams, and it was a productive and insightful conversation, which led me to believe that the convenor's workload was the reason for the delay. I could not help but think that these convenors were already aware of EDI issues and receptive to student input: otherwise, why would they surrender their module?

I regret my cynicism about the intentions and perspectives of the staff who did (and, more crucially, did not) volunteer their modules for evaluation. I had some reservations at the thought of 'educating' these academics about the concepts we would have in mind when commenting on their modules. I understood the pressures of managing a busy schedule and appreciated the fact that not every member of staff would want to add to the list of effort and time-consuming responsibilities. I recall that, while it was still being conceived, some members of staff were less than receptive to the concept of the CTF and this could have been the source for some of my pessimism, as I suppose that thought - that some members of staff perhaps considered the initiative to be pointless or unnecessary – was always at the back of my mind.
Social action in a university setting is not about student voice, but rather student voices; the challenge being the risk of silencing some students in pursuit of the perspectives of others. The initiative was not without its challenges, but I have gained so much knowledge, insight into social action, and have developed relationships with academics and students with whom I share common interests and goals. My hope is that the groundwork we laid in the infancy of the CTF will allow those currently involved in the initiative to continue making

quality contributions to EDI in CLAS (and the wider institution), and that this positive change will be felt indefinitely.

A staff perspective - Tara

My background is in teaching and in the voluntary sector prior to higher education (HE) and, as such, I intuitively take a person/pupil-centred approach to my work. My interest, since being a classroom teacher, has always been in the pupils or the students who appeared to be on the periphery of things, not quite fitting in or belonging. This led to an extended career period working with young people who were described as “hard to reach” or “NEET” (not in education, training or employment), facilitating educative opportunities and partnerships to enable positive outcomes, inclusion and success. In HE I found that my practice and my evolving research were around questions of recognition, representation, and inclusion, and I was keen to extend my understanding of the pedagogies which enabled students to feel included and to succeed.
It made sense to me to engage students in dialogue and in action about their curriculum: its strengths, its areas for development, what made engaging with learning easy and what made it difficult. Working with students in this way provides them with a deeper insight into teaching and learning processes – as Jesney states, she started to consider her modules differently – and it can also lead to students taking more responsibility for their education (Cook-Sather, 2015). Certainly, I observed students growing in confidence, stepping into the expert roles I had created, and engaging in deeply felt discussion and reflection which had personal as well as School-wide benefits. One student stated:

> “Witnessing changes in myself throughout the year has affected how I perceive change within EDI work, in that it doesn’t have to result in a sizable, visible outcome, but can be subtle and continuous, both internally and externally, positively affecting the everyday”.

Statements such as these represent tangible benefits to the student, their sense of self, and their ability to utilise insights and critical reflection to positively impact their university academic experience. I was keen to showcase, not only the CTF students’ module evaluations, but also their personal learning and growth, and encouraged them to co-prepare and present their experiences of the CTF to School, Faculty, University and sector-wide audiences with me. In doing so, despite my best intentions of empowerment and enablement of student voices, I was undermining my stance on ethics and values in work with students. I was, unwittingly, using my position of power (university tutor) to influence my students to co-present in spaces which were, at least to begin with, uncomfortable for them. Worse, our co-presenting was likely to lead to a higher profile and public recognition for me, but very little, in practical terms, for the students. Cook-Sather reminds us of our ethical responsibility to the participating students and how we ought to support them through a partnership process which can be “challenging, daunting, potentially vulnerable-making" (2015, p259). While our co-creation of presentations took place outside a classroom, our interactions were redoubtably those of university teacher and students. Even though I was consulting with, rather than teaching, my relationship with the students was situated in a teaching and learning context within which there can be “strong boundaries and sometimes conflictual relations between themselves and those with whom they wish to consult” (Arnot & Reay, 2007, p321). Traditional issues of power and privilege abound in action research and students as partners or leaders in HE presented a particularly complex set of contradictory power dynamics. Inhabiting different roles to implement change is a feature of action research but not one I should have expected the students to be familiar or necessarily comfortable with (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005). I was blind that the content shared by students in our shared presentations, which spoke of discomfort, lack of confidence and feeling different, might be the reasons why I ought *not* to ask them to co-present with me.

My desire to ensure all voices were represented to address inequity in student engagement in their learning was at odds with ensuring safety and belonging for the students involved in undertaking this work with me. As a university teacher it was my responsibility to create spaces that were safe and welcoming, not to force students into yet more discomfort (Burke, Crozier & Misiaszek, 2017). It was not until a long way into the CTF process that I learned that in my drive for student voice and autonomy, I had relinquished my responsibility for their wellbeing. My "light touch" approach to supporting them meant the CTF students struggled with uncertainty, confusion and lack of direction: and even though I had empowered them to lead this initiative, our relational power imbalance prevented them from feeling able to trouble me for help or input, even when it was sorely needed. Hur (2006) describes empowerment as both a process and a goal in action research. I had been focused on the *goal* of empowerment: students as partners or leaders in curriculum evaluation but had not paid attention to the *process* of empowerment, for which guidance and support was needed to enable the students to feel comfortable with their power. Once I had understood that the students appreciated my belief in their capabilities, but wanted regular catchups and, at times, clear direction, to enable them to complete their curriculum evaluations, I scheduled these and engaged in the process with a slightly firmer hand than hitherto.

The final issue which required me to be agile as the champion of student voice in curriculum evaluation was that of dissension amongst colleagues. Jesney mentions being aware that some staff were "less than receptive" to the idea of the CTF. This was certainly the case in the first year, when the process of recruiting module convenors to volunteer their modules was slow and thankless until the Head of School lent their weight to the initiative. Even then, staff were anxious about what this evaluation process might mean: an understandable concern in the ever-increasing regulation of HE. I shared the evaluation template with colleagues and the generalised findings of the CTF to the wider School/Faculty: the individual module reports were seen only by the students, the convenor and me. My reassurances were not, however, what persuaded colleagues that this initiative was a worthwhile activity and one which enhanced their modules for future cohorts. It was an Away Day presentation, almost completely led solely by the students, which won the hearts and minds of School staff. In this presentation the CTF students were articulate about their rationale for participating in the module – the context was the murder of George Floyd in the US and the subsequent uprisings in the US and further afield, including the UK – and the experiences each student had had in classrooms or other university spaces – of not feeling seen, heard, or welcome. This context, together with the insight and intelligence with which the students presented their generalised findings led to nearly a dozen colleagues emailing me within the following 24 hours to offer their modules for the next academic year.

Discussion

As leaders or champions of student-led initiatives, where is the line between interfering and caring? What does co-construction of knowledge mean in power-laden teacher-student relationships? And can action research principles provide the anchor to avoid the guilt and the responsibility for both staff and students? These questions, as well as many, many others, have been provoked by the experience of creating and supporting the CTF.

It was not until Jesney and I came together to write this paper that I discovered how disabling my lack of leadership had been for the CTF students. I had firmly believed that by handing over the responsibility for the CTF processes and decision making to the students, I was respecting their voices, enabling their autonomy and, importantly, not guiding their actions. On reflection, this did not constitute collaboration. To really empower the students to feel able to make decisions and develop as leaders, I needed to, first, model leadership and, second, be a semi-constant and available supportive presence. The students did not need a great deal from me:

once we agreed more regular check-ins, for example, the students became productive, and once I provided my vision for a joint presentation, the students were able to intertwine my vision with their ideas. Stepping too far away from the students was an unethical response to students as partners and one which, perhaps, was in part responsible for the attrition of CTF members as the academic year progressed.

One of the most exciting elements of being part of the CTF has been observing the construction and evolution of knowledge: my knowledge and understanding of the process of the CTF; knowledge about student perspectives on what constitutes accessibility and inclusivity; knowledge about the barriers that students from different minority groups face; and knowledge about ourselves. Jesney states that the CTF generated a significant amount of knowledge for the students involved:

> "It altered our approach to collaborative and independent work, our views of our own course materials, and broadened our perspective of Students as Partners".

Knowledge that has arisen from the students' evaluations is slowly but positively impacting the development of academic modules and processes across our School and student consultation is now the norm and not the exception.

There is still a question about how truthful our interactions and sharing can ever be in the context of staff- student relationships. The CTF was my idea and while it was welcomed and even appreciated by the students who participated in it, it is unlikely their voices would have had such a platform without my creating one. In a university, the staff hold the power for student outcomes, student wellbeing and student experiences, so handing over a small amount of power and control in one area of the curriculum can hardly be said to be indicative of a fundamental commitment to power sharing and co-construction. The nuances of power sharing are made more complex by the reported need for guidance and require adept positioning of teacher as supporter and co-lead, rather than either highly visible director or invisible champion. Action research principles, although not written into the CTF explicitly, are evident in the experiences of both students and teacher. Jesney identifies the learning she gained from exploring unfamiliar modules and how this enabled her to assess which perspectives were plentiful or lacking in the modules she was studying, sometimes through seeing the materials through the eyes of her CTF peers who brought alternative, new lenses due to their differences. Counter to this positive experience was the challenge of the idea of the CTF becoming a focus of interest, rather than the action for positive change we were aiming for, and the danger of investing more time in developing presentations about our work than undertaking the evaluation work itself!

Co-construction was certainly a goal of the CTF, with the focus being on evolving new understandings between module convenors and CTF students, however challenges such as student attrition each year and the requirement for the reports to be completed sometimes flew in the face of such a principle and those stalwart students who remained engaged were relied on to finalise the module reports and interview the convenors. This contravened the principle that initiatives such as the CTF ensure that all the most appropriate voices are heard, rather than those to whom we usually give voice and highlighted the difficulty of enabling autonomy and empowerment in a structure bound by deadlines, schedules and hierarchies.
In my desire to create and embed change with student voice at the fore, I was guilty of aiming for action without necessarily thinking about the possible harm those actions might do to the enactors. Jesney rightly refers to staff evading their responsibility to the CTF by avoiding meetings or being unreceptive to the CTF and has admitted that she was fearful of how visible

she was in the CTF and how the prospect of its failure was something she found quite damaging. There should have been more forethought and care built into the planning and delivery of the CTF each year, for example, to provide reassurance that the students' academic work should always be prioritised over their paid work, and that academic deadlines were more important than CTF deadlines. Empowering students to lead is a risk-laden responsibility and an opportunity to listen and re-learn.

Conclusion

"If I am being completely honest, it hadn't dawned on me that what I was participating in could be 'social action research' until Tara suggested we speak at CARN" (Jesney)

Jesney's reflection encapsulates how we approached the CTF and the subsequent thinking about and sharing of our work. When we began, my fledgling idea was to create a space in which students felt able to review and feedback on their curriculum. What has emerged is a robust set of criteria which has evolved and re-configured each year to respond to the changing student body and an opportunity, as Jesney has articulated, for students to learn about their curriculum, undertake collaborative and independent work, and navigate new and sometimes challenging roles. In this sense it is action research for social justice, challenging long-held norms and seeking to make positive change where change is needed.

While I have drawn on research into student voice and students as partners to help to explore some of the issues we encountered, it might be more useful to draw on practice-based experiences to illuminate the challenges of student-led initiatives such as the CTF. Extending the metaphor of collaboration ever further and ensuring that the voices and experiences of students are shaping the dissemination of our learning about student-led EDI work – something we have attempted to do in this piece – is the way in which we can continue to learn about what students need to feel heard, seen and valued in their academic environment.

"The network of support we have established, amongst ourselves and with the staff members backing the EDI initiatives, is truly inspiring, and an unexpected bonus of the experience." (Jesney Swift, CTF student leader, University of Nottingham).

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Acts of publication: towards a sociology of absences in Action Research:

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Introduction

This paper represents an 'output' that has emerged from a series of my reflections, drawn from presentations, publications, interchanges and discussions on knowledge democracy over a few years. To say that I put it here in the public domain as an action research act in its own right might seem self-evident, yet it contradicts so much of contemporary research practice that this needs to be stated and furthermore, developed as an issue for inquiry.

Acts of publication are subject to the demands of a global academy which has become circumscribed by rules and regimes of competition between institutions so that institutional priorities for gaining status are the key determinants of the focus and the place of publication for scholarly work. Thus the processes that lead to research papers appearing in print - the publication 'outputs' of those working in the academy – bring a skewed rigour to the knowledge bases of the research literature. Action research may be no exception, despite its aim to surface the deeper aspects of research processes, and – exceptionally – to welcome reports of less than 'successful' research projects.

The opportunity to present a paper at CARN 2023 in Manchester enabled me to open up this line of inquiry by sharing some of my reflections with others and inviting dialogue on exploring a knowledge democratic approach to publication and the search for what this might mean, with the intention of maintaining a focus on my practice and my theorising of it.

The starting point for this theorising should in my view begin with exploring how to decolonise knowledge, the means of knowledge production and processes of knowing. My field of study concerns my practice as a writer, and the reflection I wanted to share concerned acts of publication: what kind of material arrives in the academic canon, how it does so - and how this led me to consider what has been left out of the conventional action research knowledge base. My understanding of knowledge democratic publication processes as embracing the means to honour the contributions of actual people, rather than just their published texts, in influencing my thinking had implications for my practice in writing this paper. It became important for me to publicly acknowledge the collective work inspired by discussions among academic colleagues on knowledge democracy. So instead of the conventional route of acknowledgement via citations, I want to try to indicate how these influences have been alive in relationships.

I had also begun to acknowledge and explore my participation in non-academic networks as a knowledge democracy issue. I had gradually become clear to me that my own experiences as an environmental activist needed to be allowed to enter my practice frame. For those people whose lives are marginalised and lack the means to publish, such less formal ways of producing knowledge are their only route. For a privileged professional like myself, it seemed as though I had a choice. However, as Vanessa Machado de Oliveira observes in 'Hospicing Modernity' over her own writing:

> 'As I started to write this book I was very reluctant to have personal stories show up in public. Little did I know that they were planning a coup.' (Machado de Oliveira 2021 p xiv)

Inquiry into acts of publication
For CARN 2023 I particularly wanted to connect to other action researchers working, like me, in the area of climate change – though my work in this area has always been external to my academic work. My participation at the ARNA conference of 2017 in San Diego had begun to open up this possibility thanks to a presentation by Blair Niblett on environmental ethics taken from his then forthcoming co-authored book (Jickling et al 2021). Blair presented an ethical framework to guide our discussion and this provoked conversations acoss a wide range of environmental issues, from several different perspectives. I found it impossible not to take part as an environmental activist rather than an academic, and thus began to extend the scope of my personal presence at the event.

I signalled the desire to connect with climate change researchers by calling my paper "Invisible Threads: Evidence of Participatory Practice in the UK Environmental & Sustainability Movement", with the intention of inquiring as to whether other action resesearchers had also encountered the kind of 'invisible' – ie undocumented - participatory practices I had met in my environmental work.

I was fortunate in presenting alongside Inky Bruynse who opened our parallel session with an account of a mutually supportive community based network of practitioners in South Africa. This fitted well with my own focus on community based participatory practice among environmental activists and so we all benefited from wide-ranging discussion on both papers. Inky also introduced me to 'Hospicing Modernity', a further source to help me in understanding knowedge decolonisation.

The initial focus of my CARN conference paper was the chapter I wrote with Cathy Sharp on PAR and its history in the UK (Sharp & Balogh 2021), for the Sage Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry (Burns Howard & Ospina 2021). I was yet more fortunate in having Cathy's presence and contributions within the session.

Other contributors to the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA)'s knowledge democracy initiatives also took part. My inquiry has been embedded in my practice as an author and speaker, working alone, collaboratively, and in interplay with conference presentations – also alone and collaboratively. Thus my practice has been situated variously as co-author, co-presenter, single author, sole presenter and within the web of discussions and relations that all these circumstances have afforded me.

The 'travelling circus'
Along with Lonnie Rowell, Carmen Martinez Vargas, Malida Mooken, Erik Lindhult and Olav Eikeland, my evolving thinking has been anchored in the work of a group we called the Knowledge Democracy Interest Global Group (KDIGG). With the ultimate aim of creating a publication on knowledge democracy, we met online regularly over a two and a half year period with presentations and discussions, and made collaborative presentations at international action research conferences hosted by ARNA, IJAR (International Journal of Action Research), SPARK (Swedish Participatory Action Research Community), CARN. Olav called this 'the travelling circus' as we went around the world virtually, adapting to each conference's requirements, amending our practice as presenters and developing our thinking as our knowledge base grew.

In parallel, Lonnie Rowell curated a special edition of the Social Publishing Foundation's journal of essays on the Global Knowedge Democracy Assembly in Cartagena Colombia in 2017, to

which I contributed (Balogh 2022), and so also did Lonnie Rowell, Erik Lindhult and Carmen Martinez Vargas, (Social Publishers Foundation 2022).

We would have presented at CARN 2023 but for the withdrawal from the group of Erik due to serious illness in summer 2023 and the sudden death of Olav in the autumn.

Academic writing

In the language of performance review in higher education, academic writing is framed as a product. This context and terminology obliterates the content of our work, but also the associated acts of inquiry: coming to know, relating, reading, editing and so on, that take place in the creation of a final published text. Richard Winter alerts us to the richness of these processes, and in published dialogue with Graham Bradley (Winter & Bradley 2007) considered the process of academic writing as a kind of action research worthy of deliberation in its own right. Writing, they agree, is an act bearing much resemblance to action research, but its positioning with the constraints of academia tempers its possibilities.

The modern 'page' allows for provisionality (drafting and re-drafting) in a way that speech precludes; the slow pace of writing provides time for reflection, text on screen can be readily altered. Re-thinking and revising exist as possibilities in the creation of our written texts – in contrast to the immediacy and declarative nature of speech.

In my conference presentation I spoke to three phases of reflective inquiry into Sharp & Balogh 2022 as follows:

- The first came from the conversations between myself and Cathy, and the editorial process that shaped the final text.
- The second derived from the editors' desire to make the handbook more publicly accessible by inviting contributors to create brief online introductions to each of the chapters (Sharp & Balogh 2022).
- The third arrived as I began to connect some of the insights that Cathy and I had developed in the writing with my own experiences as an environmental activist, where I had encountered a surprisingly rich vein of participatory practice in recent years. These connections had already begun to inform my essay on the Global Assembly for Knowledge Democracy (Balogh 2022); developed further in presentations I made with the KDIGG in Turkey and Sweden; and in a book chapter from the Austrian CARN conference 2022 (Rauch Balogh Lechner & Schuster 2023)

Where to begin?

Gramsci tells us that the choice of where to begin a historical account is a political choice. For our book chapter we chose to begin as far back as we could in the UK, at the time of reconstruction and recovery from the conflict and trauma of World War Two, with the thinking and practice of Kurt Lewin, whose ideas and practice had aroused interest in official UK circles. Very soon, our studies jumped 30 years to the 1970s with the founding of CARN in 1976, and after that they jumped another couple of decades, to Educational Action Research and the first of the AR journals in the 1990s. It became clear that much of the work of those initial decades remains undocumented.

We foregrounded this issue right at the start of our chapter, noting:

> 'the constraints on publishing AR and its implications for our account. Until … 1993 … no dedicated peer-reviewed journals existed for sharing AR accounts. Thus initial

> articulation of AR in the UK appears either in full-length books, unpublished dissertations or 'grey literature'. (Sharp & Balogh 2022 p.154-5)

I knew from my parallel experience as an activist – I'd worked in a ground-breaking community development project in London in the mid-1970s – that the practices we were struggling to develop during those early decades of the 1970s were in fact informed by a grasp of the same intellectual underpinnings that we continue to draw upon today in the AR community. At the same time that we were organising food co-ops and festivals we were discussing Gramsci and Friere. We knew and felt the connections between our work and their ideas, but – in retrospect - examining our practice in relation to them seemed beyond our competence. Until I began my work on the chapter, my two doors of entry into the world of action research had led me into areas that only slightly overlapped.

Likewise Cathy too uncovered significant absences from the UK action research literature. The earliest concerned the ambitious AR programme funded by the government Home Office to support 12 local Community Development Projects (CDPs) as a national anti-poverty initiative between 1970 and 1978. Many of the CDP teams – and local residents - developed a radical critique of government policies, moving away from their official framing as social pathology to a grasp of the structural nature of oppression - which became too uncomfortable for the authorities to tolerate. The entire suite of projects closed prematurely. An online collection provides some insights but comes nowhere near to matching the scope of the projects themselves.

I would argue that these partially documented, or entirely undocumented, elements of the complex pattern of action research networks that characterised the 1970s nonetheless remain a powerful yet unacknowledged influence on our understandings and practice of action research today. A sociology of this kind of absence would help deepen our grasp of our history.
We found these lacunae unsettling. I articulated a long-standing concern – that my approach of trying to ground my own AR practice in initial literature review, and my encouragement of students to do the same – were highly partial in a way that I coudn't even know. What about the literature that is missing, the projects that have never been documented? While Cathy and I were able to draw on our own experiences and understandings to identify the existence of some of the gaps, how could younger researchers do so?

This led me to consider how publication practices and the way they are socially situated in the power structures of the academy drive the way that our knowledge base is defined, following Bruno Latour & colleagues in their study of the social construction of science facts (Latour et al 1992). And it led me further to consider how in this way the academy privileges research and teaching over the third of Lewin's famous triangle of 'action research and teaching'. It does so via the reification and thus commodification of 'knowledge' as propositional knowledge alone, an anxiety that Winter too articulated in the paper on academic writing (op. cit p 266). Such commodification operates at the expense of an extended epistemology and the tacit knowledge inherent in practice - where processes of knowing are more firmly aligned with action and become an invitation to further inquiry (Rauch, Balogh Lechner & Schuster 2023).

I also began to grasp the extent to which many practices by their nature cannot be documented. Certainly in academia it's impossible to publish material defined as 'research' which doesn't have the necessary permissions and doesn't follow the textual practices required by official research ethics and professional practice frameworks.

Thus the act of publishing this paper seems, to me, a radical act in its own right.

A sociology of absences

Moreover, the actions which publication practices have crowded out of our knowledge base have often been controversial and radical in nature. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in proposing a radical Minifesto towards an Epistemology of the South, talks of this phenomenon as a 'sociology of absences':

> 'One of the tricks that Western modernity plays on intellectuals is to allow them only to produce revolutionary ideas in reactionary institutions. On the other hand, those who act radically seem to be silent. Either they have nothing intelligible to say, or if they were to speak, nobody would understand them outside their circle of action, or they might even be thrown in jail or killed.' (de Sousa Santos 2016 p 18)

My life as an environmental activist then began pushing at the doors of these ideas. In recent years I've become involved as one of the principal actors in an internationally significant campaign to halt the development of a new English coal mine in Whitehaven, Cumberland. The central thrust of the campaign has taken place in the courts, but we have also conducted it on many fronts, with local work to raise awareness of the complexity of the issues, beyond the truncated arguments presented by the media. We have also conducted it in partnership with other environmental organisations concerned with the impact of fossil fuels on the climate. As the local Friends of the Earth group Co-ordinator, this has given me the opportunity to experience directly a whole range of participatory practices and ideas used within the wider environmental and sustainability movement. I encountered these as we built and developed our alliance network for the purpose of campaigning together, and also through connecting with sustainability initiatives.

One example of the innovative practices I experienced at first hand was via a local People's Climate Assembly – a type of process which embraces participatory deliberation among ordinary citizens with the specific intention of enhancing democracy (Bachtiger et al 2018). I was invited to serve on its Oversight Panel, a structure of local stakeholders of the kind familiar to me as an action researcher that served as a form of governance for the Assembly but also two-way source of information and advice, communication channel, and potential enabler of possibilities for action resulting from the Assembly's deliberations. We were able to view some of the Assembly's meetings online, and to follow the process from start to finish.

Initially I thought I might keep a journal and that I'd be able to document the way it was carried out and locate it within the action research context. But it wasn't long before I realised that the complexity of adhering to Ethical guidelines, obtaining permissions and so forth made this approach impossible to pursue. Reporting on such an initiative could be feasible, it seemed to me, but I was encountering barriers posed by the conventions of empirical research reporting. The participatory practices I was encountering amongst environmentalists wouldn't normally appear within the Action Research canon because they aren't documented, yet there is much that I think really counts, and testifies to the strength of our approach. My desire to document some of these practices grew. I began by simply listing within my abstract some of the practices that I had seen and experienced in use:

- participatory grant-making
- citizens' juries
- non-violent communication
- assets-based approaches
- trust building

Within the presentation it was clear that I couldn't develop all of these, and so I decided to concentrate on one that I thought would be least familiar to the workshop participants: participatory grant-making.

Members of our group had begun a small community development project in one of the West Cumbrian towns where many people are poor. Aware that government policy was pitting the needs of the climate crisis against the needs of families to survive, we wanted instead to directly connect the Cost of Living Crisis with the Climate Crisis. We'd been awarded a small grant to pay a community researcher to scope the possibilities for a larger project which could create ways for people to live more sustainably and cheaply at the same time. This work was just ending when we heard of the opportunity to bid for longer term work with a major fund.
The process of bidding for funds was so welcoming and actively supportive that even though – despite passing through two stages: from thousands of initial bids through to around a hundred and finally to the final round of 30 when we were rejected – we felt very proud of our achievement. Furthermore, the funders actively recognised the quality of our bid and provided us not only with further advice as to who might fund it, but also with a free due diligence check on our governance (something that many funders make use of but which entails cost to the bidder).

Below is an example of the kind of support we received from the outset, when our bid was in preparation. It takes the form of a message from the funders containing an invitation to receive expert one-to-one advice at a half-hour meeting where the discussion would focus on a 'grant memo' template they had sent us. The expert offered options as to how to work together on the basis of the

'Grant Memo form which we will be co-creating together. There are a few ways we can do this:

- You can use the meeting to work through the questions and complete the form together
- You can use the meeting to ask questions and then go away and complete the form afterwards (in these first two cases please book a meeting ASAP)
- You can produce a draft and send it to me prior to the meeting and then we can use this time to go through this and strengthen it ' (email communication)
-

A process that embraced this level of implied trust between funders and bidders was unknown to us, and completely changed our attitude towards it. Instead of feeling in competition with others for the attention of the powerful, we felt that the funders had a genuine interest in what we were trying to do – something backed up by comments made in the final interview in which we obtained valuable advice as to how to proceed. The expert – a person who we discovered, in conversation, had come from the very most marginalised of oppressed communities - thanked us 'for your resistance'.

To place this information in the public domain where others can cite it as a successful, egalitarian and empowering way of disbursing funds, is to my mind not just an act which sheds light on some of the hitherto undocumented practices outside of the academy that align powerfully with the concerns of action research and knowledge democracy. As such, I hope it also contributes to a sociology of absences within the Action Research knowledge base. But more than these, it could also be a radical act, because it demonstrates - within the wider argument of this paper - how radical acts themselves have been absent from the Action Research literature. And finally, it could also be an act of resistance - resistance to the non-participatory world in which we struggle to find settings of hope where we can practice in a participatory way and share examples of radical acts.

I'm grateful most of all to my colleagues in the action research community for creating forums for publication which, in the pursuit of knowledge-democracy embrace a diversity of voice and a supportive approach. Publications like the CARN Bulletin, the new CARN PRAXIS journal and the Social Publishers Foundation offer a revitalised platform where radical material that could never meet the conventional requirements of the academy can be shared.

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Laborschule Bielefeld: Action Research from the very beginning:

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Introduction

At Laborschule Bielefeld both democratic education and action research have a long-standing tradition. As a laboratory school, it has developed a pedagogical concept as well as a teacher-as-researcher approach, that has placed it in a unique position within the German educational landscape for many years. Using methods of action research, educators at Laborschule and researchers at Laboratory School Research Unit, which belongs to the Faculty of Education at Bielefeld University, have developed various elements – such as a school constitution and student parliaments – to make democratic education part of Laborschule's institutional core. By taking part in decision-making processes from an early age, its students are offered meaningful participation in shaping their experiences of school (cf. Beadle et al., 2023).

This conference report is based on the seminar presentation. The teacher-researcher approach of Laborschule Bielefeld is therefore introduced first and an insight into a very concrete action-research project on the topic of "Democratic Education in Primary School" is given then. In this project the teachers have institutionalised children´s participation in the decision-making process. They decided to develop a democratic, institutionalised structure for the entire primary level: the Constitution of the Primary Level at Laborschule Bielefeld.

Laborschule Bielefeld: facts and figures

As an experimental school Laborschule Bielefeld has the task of developing new forms of learning and living together in the school environment. It includes primary level and lower secondary level and is divided into four key stages. The groups in key stage I and II are mixed-aged groups, so key stage I includes years 0, 1 and 2 and key stage II includes years 3, 4 and 5. In Germany, year 0 is normally a kindergarten year or a pre-school year. In order to make the transition from kindergarten to school as gentle and successful as possible, the school beginners are enrolled at Laborschule Bielefeld one year earlier. From key stage III onwards (years 6 to 10) they are then taught in same-age groups, but they are again mixed-aged in different courses (cf. Groeben et al., 2011). The Laborschule´s comprehensive structure is very unusual for Germany. This similarity with for example the US system is no coincidence: von Hentig, the founder, lived and studied in Chicago for a while and his ideas of Laborschule Bielefeld were influenced by this system.

Laborschule Bielefeld is also known for its pedagogical concept and its focus on democratic education. Individual learning and participation in the learning process are therefore of central importance. Inclusion has been a guiding principle since the school was founded in 1974, even if it wasn´t called that back then. Laborschule Bielefeld is a school for all children and the best possible support for every student is therefore sought, so that diversity is seen as an enrichment. Another very outstanding feature of Laborschule Bielefeld is the open-plan

architecture (cf. Zenke, 2018). There is one large room without fixed walls. This means that the different learning groups have to develop their space individually.

To implement these pedagogical ideas in practice, there are some special features at Laborschule Bielefeld in contrast to the state-run schools. For example, there are no marks until year 9, but instead individual learning and development reports at the end of the school year and a talk with the parents and students at half-term. In addition, students do not have to repeat a year if they have failed a class (cf. Groeben et al., 2011). And finally, special attention is paid to the composition of the student body. Due to the idea of a school as an embryonic society, which is an idea of John Dewey (1899/1976), Laborschule Bielefeld has a social admission key in order to be a genuine comprehensive school. This determines the annual admission of new students according to a number of criteria in order to be a school whose student body encompasses all social backgrounds. The admission key is therefore oriented at the composition of the population in Bielefeld. This includes all students: with and without special needs (cf. Devantiè et al., 2019).

Research Approach

The context systems with which the research and development process interacts are the research system, the education policy and the networks of progressive schools. The research approach is school development through action research. The research process is a circle of reflecting practice and improving it by developing, testing, evaluating and implementing innovations. The starting point is always a practical problem, which can be a lack of knowledge about the own practice, too. This is reflected upon and transformed into a concrete question. An attempt is then made to identify theories and methods that are appropriate to the subject matter and contribute to answering the respective question, so that something is used that could be characterised as a multi-paradigm approach.

In addition to the Laboratory School Unit, which belongs to the Ministry of Education, there is the Laboratory School Research Unit, which belongs to the Ministry of Science. The Laboratory School Research Unit is part of the Faculty of Educational Science of Bielefeld University and is chaired by the Research Director. Between these two units there is a lot of collaboration and this collaboration structure is institutionalised (cf. Textor et al., 2020). The Co-leadership Board is responsible for consulting and decision-making. In addition the Advisory Board meets once a year and discusses the research and development plan of Laborschule Bielefeld. This plan coordinates all projects. A unique feature of Laborschule Bielefeld is that teachers actively participate in research processes. Therefore there is an existing a pool of 90 teaching lessons – this is an equivalent to five teacher positions – for research work. The teachers can apply for a reduction of their lessons to conduct a research and development project or join such a project. So researching teachers are not set completely free for research, but get a reduction of two to four hours of lessons each week for one or two years for doing their research.

The collaboration process between research unit and school unit is based on four steps: orientation, application, research and aim. The first step consists of reflecting about practical problems and formulating concrete research and/or development questions (orientation). After that a project draft must be written. This is followed by advice from the advisory board and the provision of lesson reductions for teacher research (application). Multidisciplinary teams from university and school do the research together. For Laborschule Bielefeld it is very unique that

teachers and researchers collaborate equally in this teams. It is a participatory action research approach: each of them has his or her knowledge and is for example an expert for the practice, the theory or the research methods, but they all together work out the research question and the design (research). Finally, there are three possible aims: (1) Further development of Laborschule Bielefeld and professionalisation of teachers; (2) Dissemination into the education system; (3) Dissemination into the scientific system.

Pedagogical Approach and Democratic Education

The pedagogical approach of Laborschule Bielefeld is to learn by making experiences, which means both: to gain experiences and to reflect on them based on theories. In reference to Dewey´s concept of school as an embryonic society (cf. Dewey, 1897/1972), this learning includes experiences that are related to school issues and social experiences. In teaching this way of learning by making experiences is implemented by a mixture of individualised learning, collaborative learning und project learning. One very important element for this kind of teaching is the daily assembly (cf. Kurz et al., 2022). It is a teaching method from year 0 to 10, so it is a ritual and a thing of continuity. The assembly structures the day. Here the students and teachers make decisions that affect the whole group and it is a place to resolve differences. Basic skills and knowledge are also taught here and it is necessary to carry out projects by the students themselves, because they should participate in everyday school life, which also includes lessons. This is closely linked to the focus on democratic education of Laborschule Bielefeld. Democracy takes place in everyday school live as well as in decision making structures, so that participation is possible at different levels (cf. Beadle et al., 2023).

As an example from practice, the school development process for the creation of the *Constitution of the Primary Level of Laborschule Bielefeld* is briefly presented here. The idea is to institutionalise children´s participation in the decision-making process because every teacher had his own ideas of that, but democracy needs structure. This is a problem because there is no legal basis for a student participation body in Germany for these young age groups, which means that it is not really intended. For the older students this is anchored by law in the Education Act from year 5 onwards. However the teachers of Laborschule Bielefeld share the opinion that younger students can already have a meaningful say in many aspects of everyday school life. So at first the research group formed by educators and researchers conducted a survey to find out where and how participation actually took place at primary level. It became apparent that although many democratic structures were already in action, these were at the discretion of the educators in the respective group. It quickly became apparent: for real participation, students need to have a voice in the decision-making process – mandatory and independent of adults. So Laborschule´s educators decided to develop a democratic, institutionalised structure for the entire primary level. At the beginning of this working process, all educators first wrote down those areas in which they felt children should in all cases be involved in decision-making and in which children should not.

Subsequently, one area at a time was taken into account and discussed. Three basic questions guided this process: (1) Which decisions are children allowed to make themselves (self-determination)? (2) Which decisions are children allowed to make with others (co-determination)? (3) Which decisions do educators reserve for themselves (no say)?. Finally, a consensus had to be reached for every single topic and written down. In some cases, there were fierce debates about the wording. This democratic process, which took approximately

three quarters of a year, was described as exhausting but very worthwhile. This final result was then laid down in detail in a 26-page “Constitution of the Primary Level at Laborschule Bielefeld”. This constitution organises all areas of school life: from breaks to lessons, everything is taken into consideration. With the creation of this constitution, elements that are at the core of Laborschule´s pedagogical principles were transformed into tangible structures, which are binding regardless of adults and their preferences. Integrating the constitution into everyday life democracy does not come about automatically – and it is not enough to record rights on a piece of paper and then file it away in a drawer. For this reason, regular meetings of group councils and student parliaments were introduced at primary level at Laborschule Bielefeld. In these meetings, the constitution is the basis for their work. The children conduct the meetings independently, only accompanied by two educators who support them and take the minutes (cf. Kurz et al., 2022).

Whenever students can participate they feel responsible for the school and take care of common issues concerning everyday life. This way young people learn to be responsible members of their school society and gain democratic competences for society in general. The message is that young people grow when participating. They are able to make changes and participate in issues that matter. This makes Laborschule´s students strong.

For further reading

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Can reaching out to people and communities through the NEARI network influence our world for the better?

Bernie Sullivan, Bernadette Wrynn, Caitriona McDonagh, Cornelia Connolly, Máirín Glenn & Mary Roche
mcdonagh.caitriona@gmail.com

CARN 2023 was a wonderful, real-world coming together of research people and communities from many countries. From the silent candle lit Palestinian presence and march outside The Meeting House, to the marvellous Klezmer band at the conference dinner, the real world surrounded us. The international presentations swept us into a real-life educational experience. As part of this the NEARI workshop gathered ideas from an enthusiastic group of participants.

As network convenors we asked “Can reaching out to people and communities through the NEARI network influence our world for the better? Our presentation mirrored a NEARI Meet with dialogue, presentations and a wakelet for sharing thoughts and questions, network information, slides and references. All those present identified that they were bringing global perspectives from Canada, England, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Scotland, South Africa and USA.

Dr Máirín Glenn introduced how educational action research informs the NEARI network and its potential for transformation. Considering their personal research contexts, participants discussed how much they agreed with the following

- The researcher’s voice is important in educational research,
- I would use “I’ in a research account,
- Values inform my practice,
- Values inform my research.

Dr Caitriona McDonagh explained how NEARI tries to make our world a better place for researchers. Practical ways in which we support researchers are by facilitating dialogue, creating a dialogical platform for people to discuss their research stories and by listening to members. Participants then discussed and also visually (see Figure 1 below) represented their reflections on what does a better world mean in my research?

Figure 1

What these represent is summarised in Figure 2.

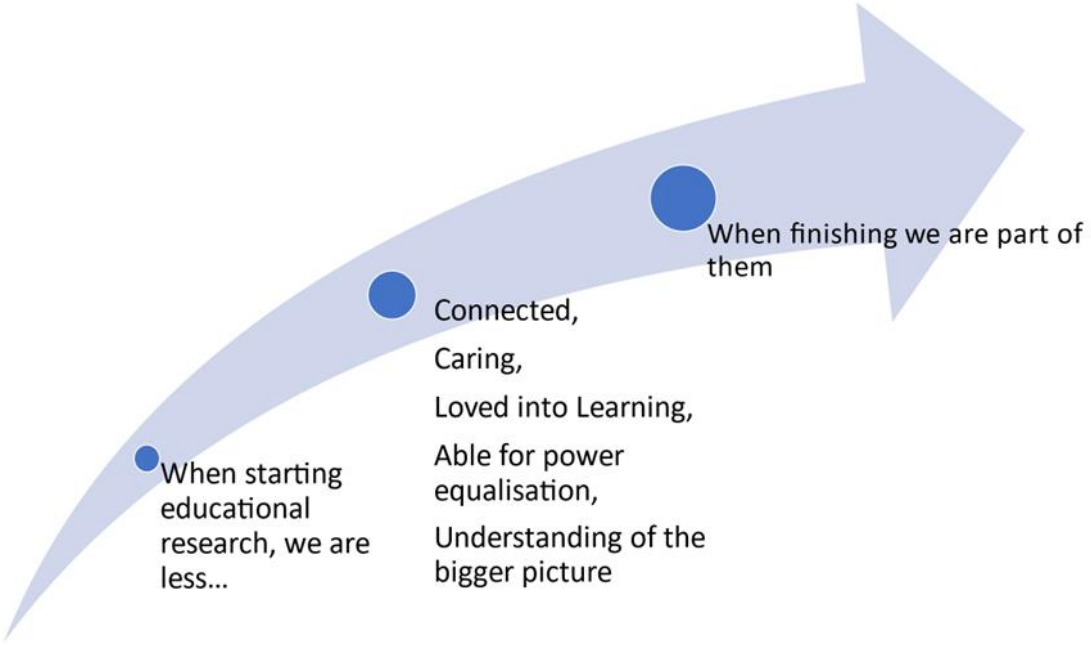


Figure 2

A further stimulating debate arose following Dr Bernadette Wrynn's reflections on the first Level 9 MEd research programme in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University, Ireland (2018-2023) focused on values-based, self-study action research. Explaining data from this course, she emphasised the importance of self-reflection for transformation and how these transformations have reached out past disciplines to broader communities.

Participants addressed how might we enhance our practice to have a meaningful influence? Figure 3 shows the ideas they shared.

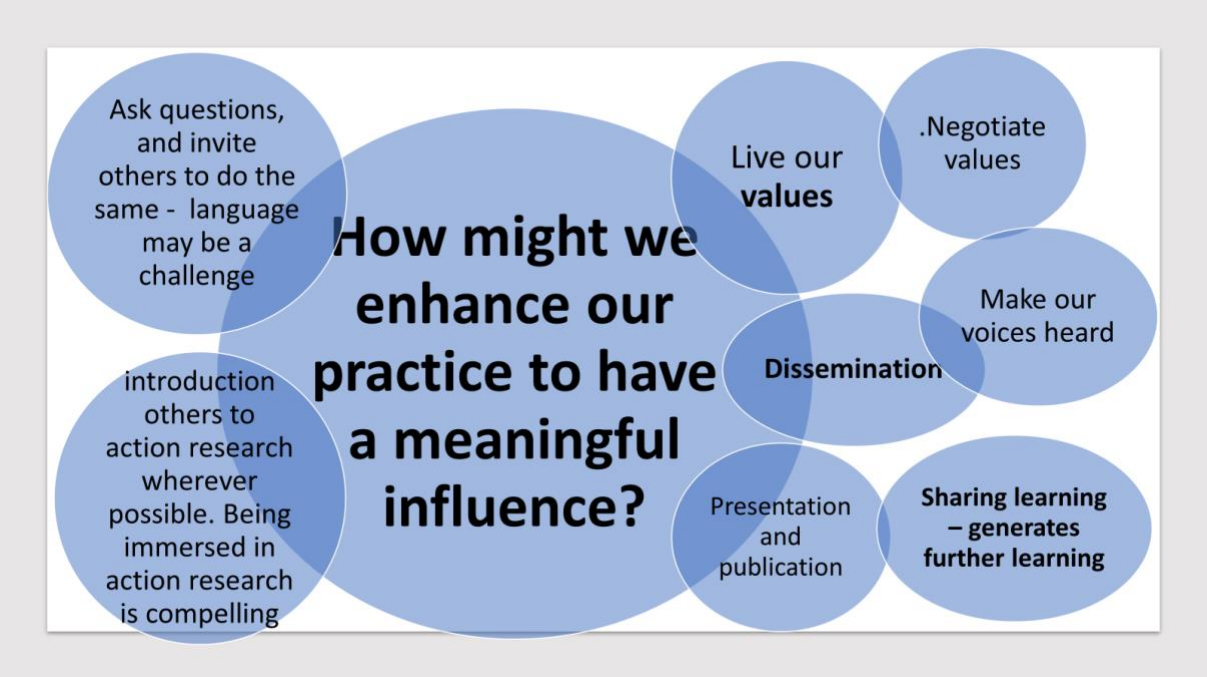


Figure 3

Thanks to all who participated in the workshop and showed how when researchers think and work together a new fabric of shared meaning comes into being.

To join us in further conversations, contact www.eari.ie, info@eari.ie, and Twitter on InfoNEARI.

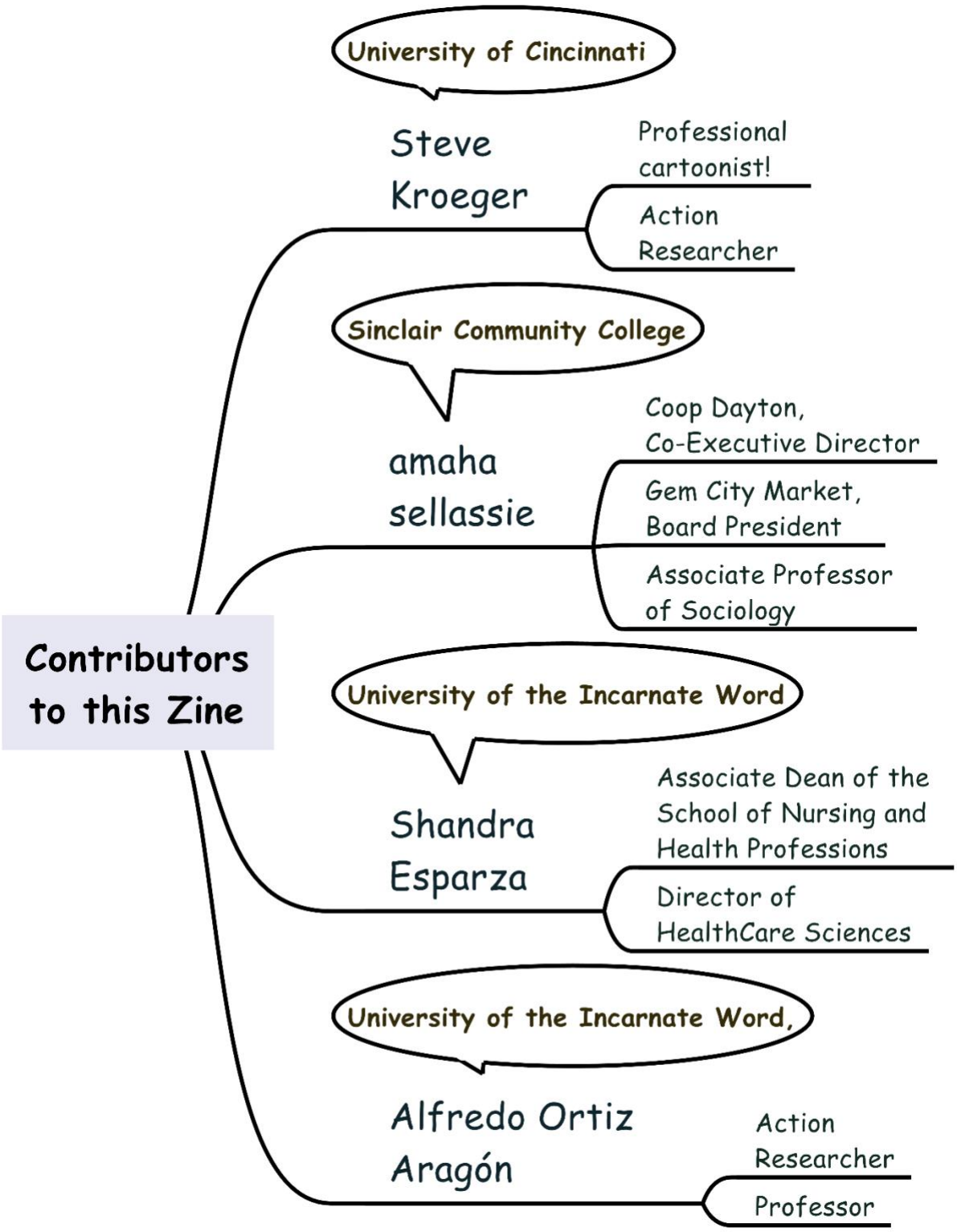
From participation and co-creation to Knowledge Democracy and co-control: implications for participatory research:

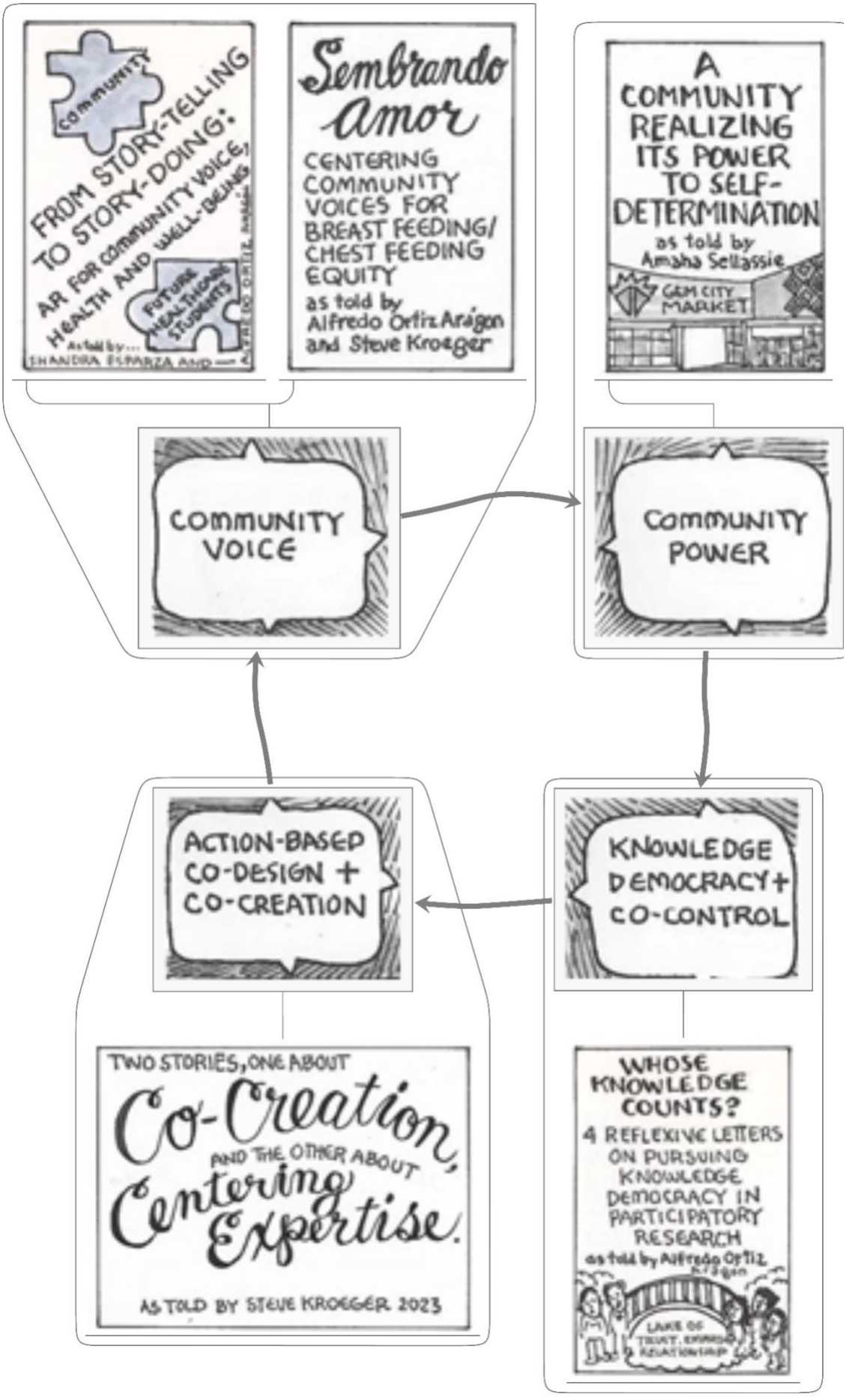
Steve Kroeger, Amaha Sellassie, Shandra Esparza & Alfredo Ortiz Aragon, University of Cincinnati & University of the Incarnate Word & Sinclair Community College
libni.alfredo@gmail.com

The pages that follow present the Zine created by Steve, Shandra, Amaha and Alfredo. We are delighted to share it with you, as part of our CARN 26 Bulletin.


HOW MIGHT WE GO FROM STORYTELLING TO STORYDOING?
HOW MIGHT ACTION RESEARCH ENGAGE COMMUNITY POWER FOR HEALTH EQUITY?
COMMUNITY VOICE
COMMUNITY POWER
FROM PARTICIPATION AND CO-CREATION TO KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY AND CO-CONTROL: IMPLICATIONS FOR PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH
ACTION-BASED CO-DESIGN + CO-CREATION
KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY + CO-CONTROL
HOW CAN ACTION RESEARCH ENHANCE CREATIVE PRACTICES FOR CO-CONTROL OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH?
WHOSE KNOWLEDGE COUNTS?

The Zine was created and produced by




COMMUNITY
FROM STORY-TELLING TO STORY-DOING:
AR FOR COMMUNITY VOICE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
FUTURE HEALTHCARE STUDENTS
As told by...
SHANDRA ESPARZA AND
Sembrando Amor
CENTERING COMMUNITY VOICES FOR BREAST FEEDING/ CHEST FEEDING EQUITY
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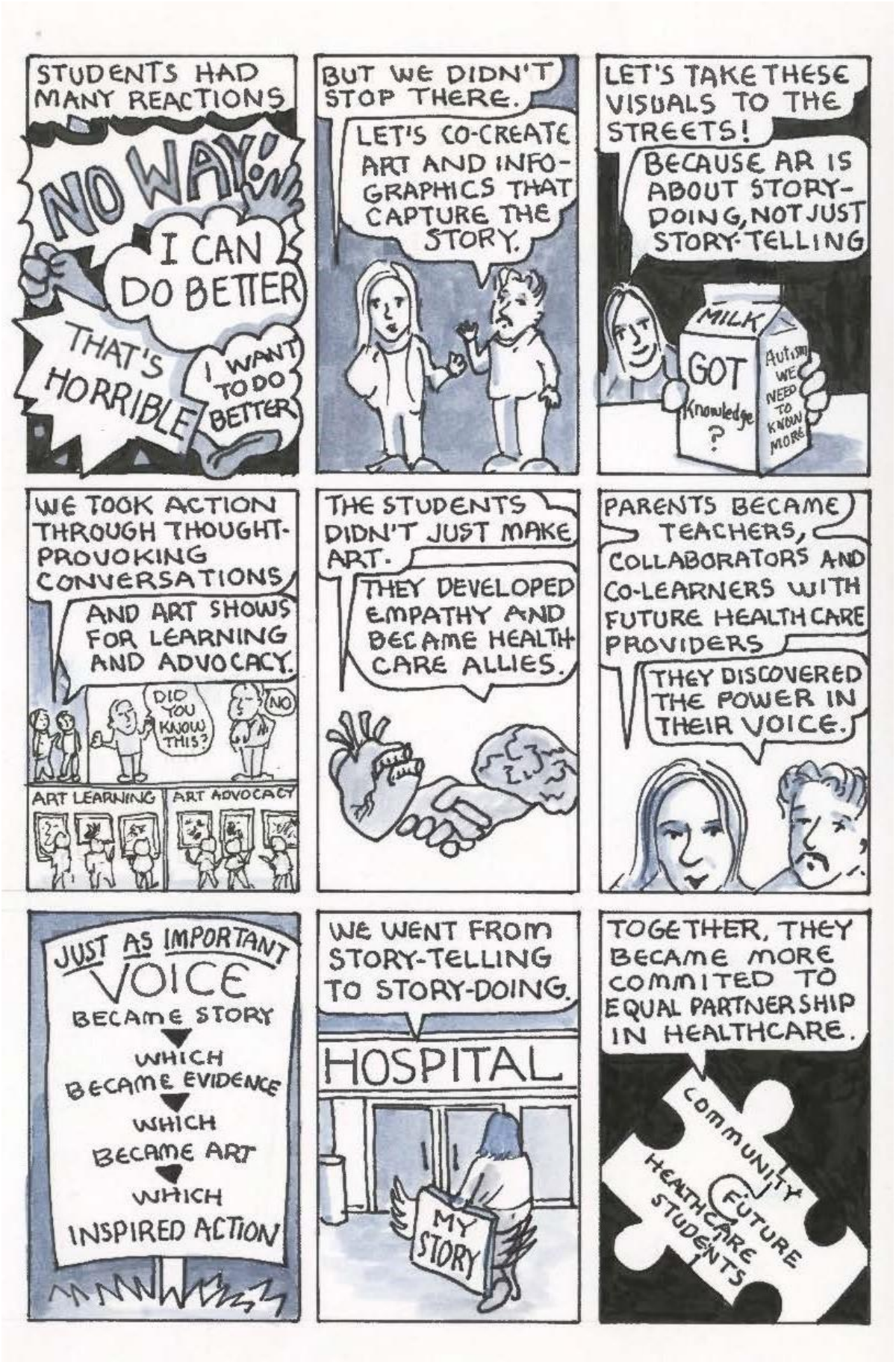
as told by Amaha Sellassie
GEM CITY MARKET
COMMUNITY VOICE
COMMUNITY POWER
ACTION-BASED CO-DESIGN + CO-CREATION
KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY + CO-CONTROL
TWO STORIES, ONE ABOUT
Co-Creation,
AND THE OTHER ABOUT
Centering Expertise.
AS TOLD BY STEVE KROEGER 2023
WHOSE KNOWLEDGE COUNTS?
4 REFLEXIVE LETTERS ON PURSUING KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH
as told by Alfredo Ortiz Aragón
LAKE OF TRUST, EMERGING RELATIONSHIP

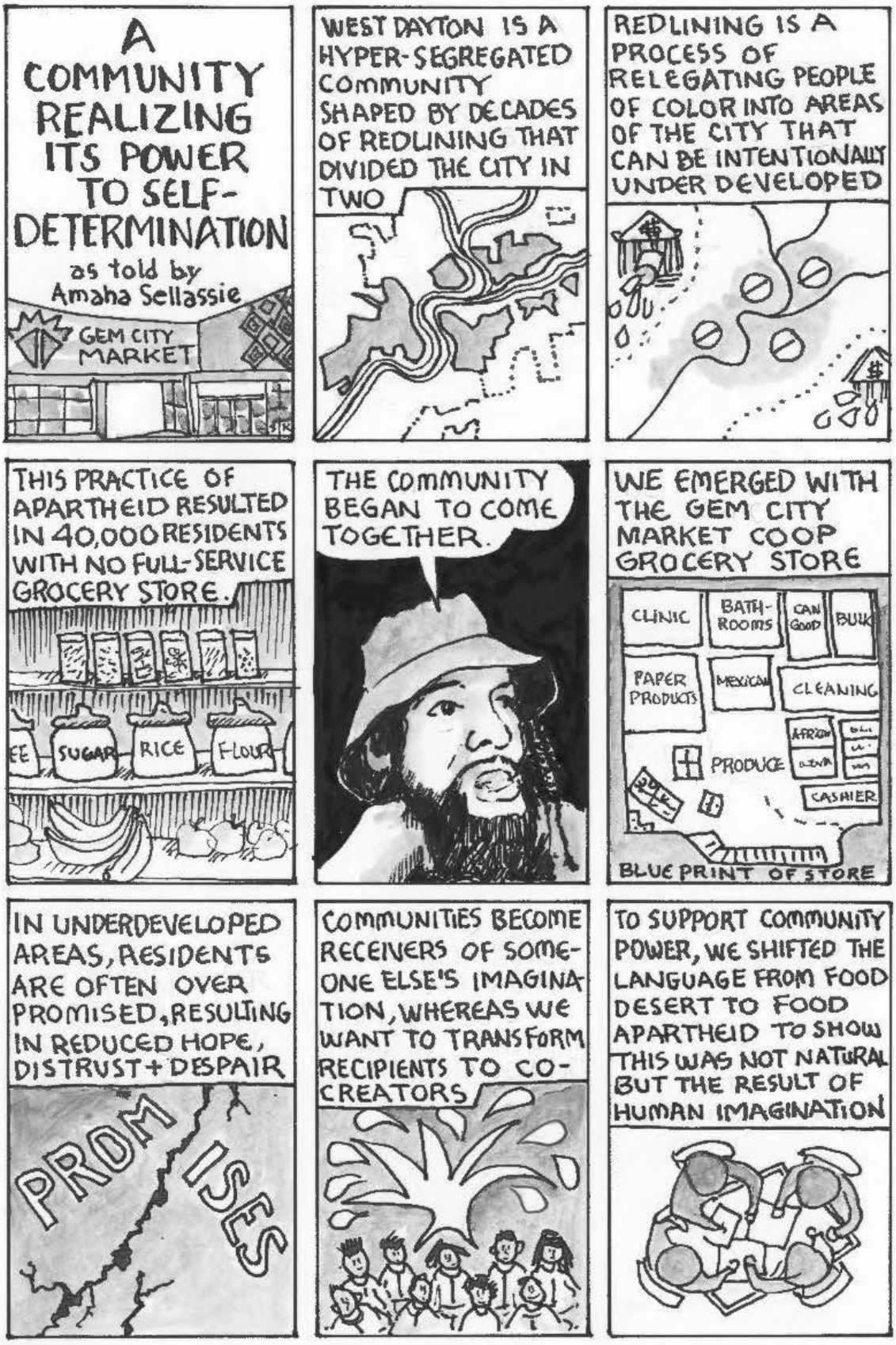

COMMUNITY
FROM STORY-TELLING TO STORY-DOING:
AR FOR COMMUNITY VOICE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
FUTURE HEALTHCARE STUDENTS
As told by...
SHANDRA ESPARZA AND
ALFREDO ORTIZ ARAGÓN
WHY ARE WE WORKING TOGETHER?
YOU WERE TRYING TO HELP COMMUNITIES ADDRESS HEALTH INEQUITIES THROUGH AR, AND I TEACH TOMORROW'S HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
WE THOUGHT, WHY NOT CONNECT THE TWO?
AND LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO DO MEDICAL EDUCATION DIFFERENTLY THROUGH AR
INTERPROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES TELL US PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE SHOULD BE WITH, FROM, AND ALONGSIDE THE PATIENT
BUT IN PRACTICE, THE PATIENT ISN'T SEEN AS AN AUTHORITY IN THEIR OWN CARE
HEY! I HAVE AN IDEA!
WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW?
COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH REMINDS US TO RE-CENTER VOICES FOR EQUAL PARTICIPATION
WE DESIGNED A "RE-WRITING THE SCRIPT" PROCESS TO DO THIS BETTER.
NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE
RWS PROCESS
POSITIVE EXPERIENCE
PARENTS OF KIDS WITH AUTISM AND HEALTHCARE STUDENTS GATHERED TO SHARE STORIES AND BRAINSTORM IMPROVED OUTCOMES
LET ME TELL YOU MY STORY
MY DOCTOR DOESN'T LISTEN TO ME ABOUT MY SON
ME EITHER! AND I KNOW A LOT ABOUT HIS NEEDS


STUDENTS HAD MANY REACTIONS
NO WAY!
I CAN DO BETTER
THAT'S HORRIBLE
I WANT TO DO BETTER
BUT WE DIDN'T STOP THERE.
LET'S CO-CREATE ART AND INFO-GRAPHICS THAT CAPTURE THE STORY.
LET'S TAKE THESE VISUALS TO THE STREETS!
BECAUSE AR IS ABOUT STORY-DOING, NOT JUST STORY-TELLING
MILK
GOT Knowledge ?
Autism WE NEED TO KNOW MORE
WE TOOK ACTION THROUGH THOUGHT-PROVOKING CONVERSATIONS
AND ART SHOWS FOR LEARNING AND ADVOCACY.
DID YOU KNOW THIS?
NO
ART LEARNING
ART ADVOCACY
THE STUDENTS DIDN'T JUST MAKE ART.
THEY DEVELOPED EMPATHY AND BECAME HEALTH CARE ALLIES.
PARENTS BECAME TEACHERS, COLLABORATORS AND CO-LEARNERS WITH FUTURE HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS
THEY DISCOVERED THE POWER IN THEIR VOICE.
JUST AS IMPORTANT
VOICE
BECAME STORY
WHICH
BECAME EVIDENCE
WHICH
BECAME ART
WHICH
INSPIRED ACTION
WE WENT FROM STORY-TELLING TO STORY-DOING.
HOSPITAL
MY STORY
TOGETHER, THEY BECAME MORE COMMITED TO EQUAL PARTNERSHIP IN HEALTHCARE.
COMMUNITY
FUTURE HEALTHCARE STUDENTS


Sembrando Amor
CENTERING COMMUNITY VOICES FOR BREAST FEEDING/ CHEST FEEDING EQUITY
as told by Alfredo Ortiz Aragón and Steve Kroeger
WHO ARE WE?
MEET THE COMMUNITY EXPERTS
SHAQUIR
DANIELLE
LUIS-SANA
YENINA
NADEZHDA
DON'T FORGET THE BROADER TEAM!
CITY OF SAN ANTONIO HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS
CHONG MIN
ANAYANSE
DELIA
YVONNE
PAULA
UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD
Judy Ann
Ciji
Alfredo
WE KNOW PEOPLE OF COLOR HAVE MIXED EXPERIENCES WITH BREASTFEEDING
SAY MORE
MOTHERS ENTER A SCARY WORLD AFTER CHILDBIRTH
YET SOME EXPERIENCE A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM THAT LACKS EMPATHY
THERE ARE DEEPER TRAUMAS AS WELL
INCLUDING LE GACIES FROM SLAVERY. SEE SHAQUIRRA'S STORY
BUT PEOPLE OF COLOR ALSO HAVE DEEP KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM
PASSED ON FROM THEIR GRAND-MOTHERS, MOTHERS, AND CULTURAL PRACTICES
THEY INHERENTLY KNOW HOW TO SOW THE SEEDS OF LOVE THROUGH BREAST-FEEDING
WITH HEALTHY KIDS, THEY CAN BREAK CYCLES OF INJUSTICE AND INEQUITY


HOW DO WE KNOW THIS?
WE ASKED THEM TO SHARE THEIR STORIES.
HOW DID WE DO THAT?
WE USED A COMMUNITY BASED ACTION RESEARCH PHOTO-VOICE PROCESS
TO CENTER THEIR KNOWLEDGE, WE TRIED TO MOVE AT THE PACE OF THE COMMUNITY EXPERTS OR CEs
WERE YOU SUCCESSFUL?
NOT ALWAYS
WHAT HAPPENED?
ONE TIME, THE CEs NEEDED MORE TIME
BUT THE AR TEAM DIDN'T WANT TO SIT IDLE
WE CREATED MODELS FROM THEIR STORIES WITHOUT THEM
PANDEMIC BREASTFEEDING
4th TRIMESTER
LACK OF HOSPITAL SUPPORT
BREASTFEEDING STRUGGLES
SUPPORT
FAMILY
COMMUNITY
IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC
WE HAD ASSUMED THEY DIDN'T WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE "RESEARCH" ACTIVITIES
WAS THAT TRUE?
NO!
THEY ASKED WHY THEY WEREN'T INCLUDED
THIS GENERATED GOOD INTERNAL DISCUSSION AND EVEN CONFLICT.
SAY MORE


WE HAD TO ASK OURSELVES WHAT WE MEANT BY EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION
WE NEGLECTED TO INVITE PARTICIPATION AT EVERY TURN
(IAP2)
INFORM
CONSULT
INVOLVE
COLLABORATE
EMPOWER
THE CEs WONDERED IF THEY WERE BEING HEARD.
OUR PHOTOVOICE PROCESS HAD BUILT COMMUNITY WITHIN THE TEAM
BUT COMMUNITY VOICE WAS STILL MISSING
WE ASKED, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
AFTER EXPLORING OPTIONS TOGETHER, THE CEs CONCLUDED
LET'S DO A CARTOON ZINE!
FEATURING STORIES WE REALLY WANT TO TELL
WITH STEVE'S HELP, WE INVITED THE CEs TO SKETCH
CREATE A STORY-BOARD AND DRAFT CARTOON
STEVE CAN HELP REFINE IT
EACH CE CONTRIBUTED IN DIFFERENT WAYS.
TOGETHER WE CREATED THE SEMBRANDO AMOR ZINE
TO FULFILL THE CE's DESIRE TO INFORM, ADVOCATE AND CHANGE SYSTEMS, WE HAVE PRESENTED TOGETHER IN MULTIPLE PLACES
WE WENT FROM STORYTELLING TO STORY DOING
SO, WHAT'S NEXT?
SO MANY IDEAS!
LET'S GO BACK AND ASK THE TEAM.

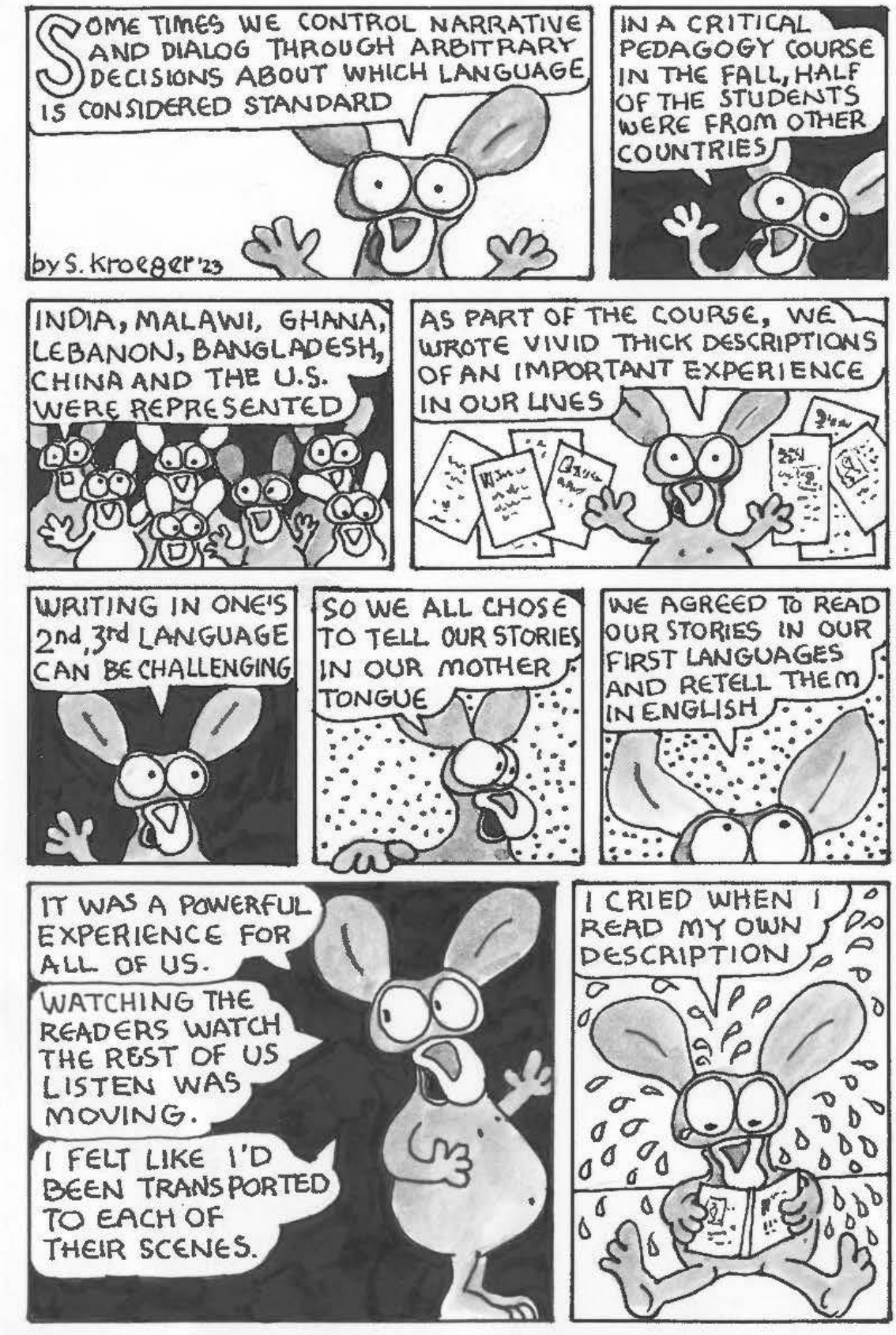

A COMMUNITY REALIZING ITS POWER TO SELF-DETERMINATION
as told by Amaha Sellassie
GEM CITY MARKET
WEST DAYTON IS A HYPER-SEGREGATED COMMUNITY SHAPED BY DECADES OF REDLINING THAT DIVIDED THE CITY IN TWO
REDLINING IS A PROCESS OF RELEGATING PEOPLE OF COLOR INTO AREAS OF THE CITY THAT CAN BE INTENTIONALLY UNDER DEVELOPED
THIS PRACTICE OF APARTHEID RESULTED IN 40,000 RESIDENTS WITH NO FULL-SERVICE GROCERY STORE.
SUGAR
RICE
FLOUR
THE COMMUNITY BEGAN TO COME TOGETHER.
WE EMERGED WITH THE GEM CITY MARKET COOP GROCERY STORE
CLINIC
BATH-ROOMS
CAN GOOD
BULK
PAPER PRODUCTS
MEXICAN
CLEANING
PRODUCE
CASHIER
BLUE PRINT OF STORE
IN UNDERDEVELOPED AREAS, RESIDENTS ARE OFTEN OVER PROMISED, RESULTING IN REDUCED HOPE, DISTRUST + DESPAIR
PROMISES
COMMUNITIES BECOME RECEIVERS OF SOMEONE ELSE'S IMAGINATION, WHEREAS WE WANT TO TRANSFORM RECIPIENTS TO CO-CREATORS
TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY POWER, WE SHIFTED THE LANGUAGE FROM FOOD DESERT TO FOOD APARTHEID TO SHOW THIS WAS NOT NATURAL BUT THE RESULT OF HUMAN IMAGINATION

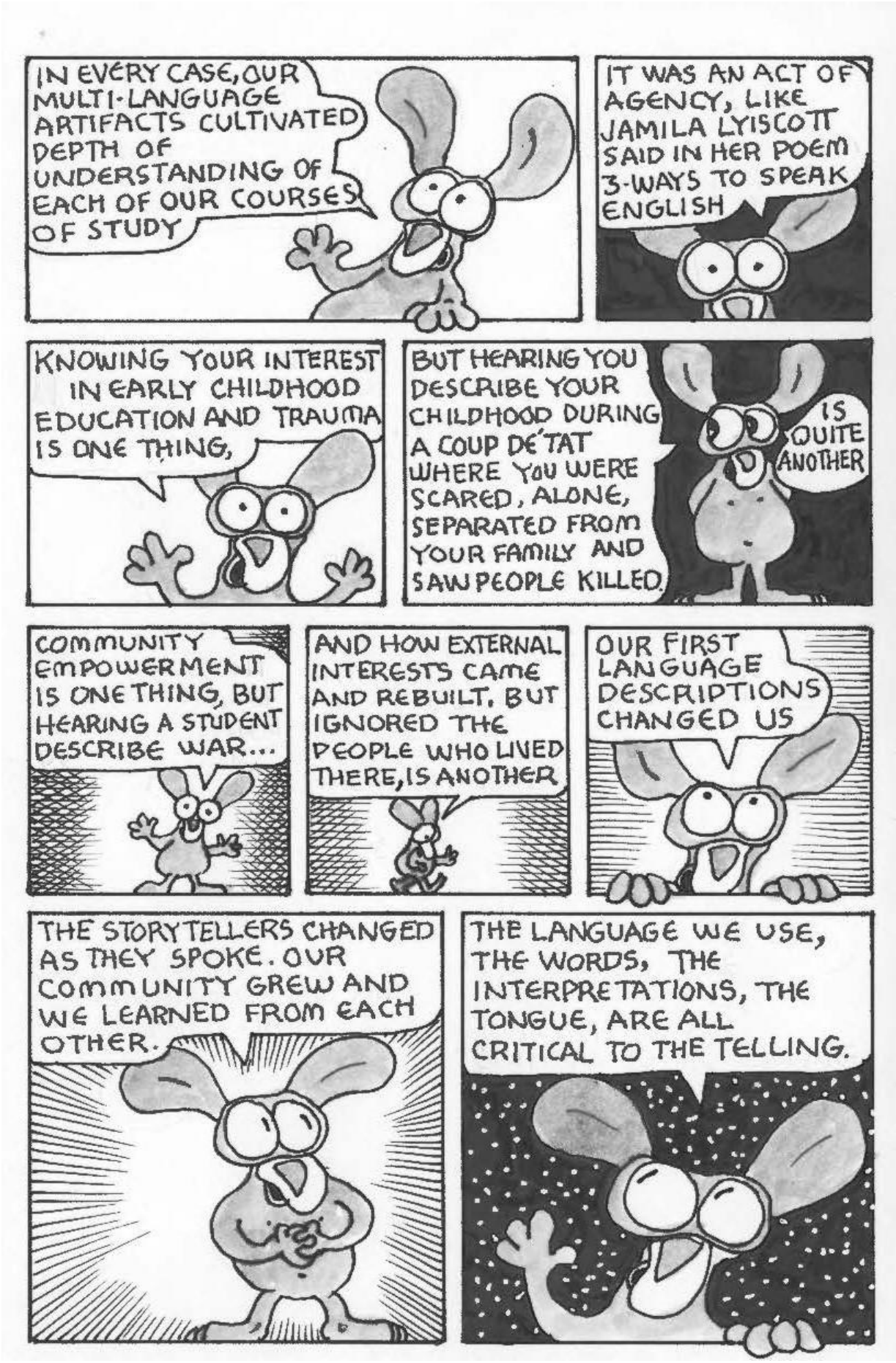

IF MANMADE, WE HAVE POWER TO RE-IMAGINE, RE-HOPE, AND RE-ACTIVATE OUR GIFTS TO TRANSFORM OUR LIVED ENVIRONMENT
DEEP PARTICIPATION AND CO-CREATION ENABLED US TO EMERGE COMMUNITY POWER. FOR EXAMPLE...
WE CO-CREATED OUR MISSION STATEMENT WITH OVER 200 PEOPLE WORKING IN SMALL CIRCLES
BECAUSE OUR GROUND-BREAKING WAS A CULMINATION OF EVERYONE'S EFFORT, WE GOT EVERYONE A SHOVEL (LIKE OPRAH) NOT JUST ELECTED OFFICIALS.
WE ALSO DID A DEEP LISTENING CAMPAIGN TO LEARN MORE FROM THE COMMUNITY AND DEEPEN OUR RELATIONSHIPS AROUND THE MARKET.
WE OWN IT
WE OWN IT
PARTICIPATION INCLUDED VOTING ON AN EXEMPTION TO SELL ALCOHOL IN A DRY AREA.
I VOTED
COMMUNITY POWER EMERGED FROM OUR COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE. PEOPLE SEE THE MARKET BUT I SEE ALL THE SMALL DECISIONS WE MADE TO CO-CREATE THE MARKET.
TO DESIGN THE MARKET, OUR ARCHITECTS HOSTED OPEN SESSIONS AND TABLED AT COMMUNITY EVENTS TO GET FEEDBACK
ORIGINALLY WE WERE GOING TO HAVE THE BATHROOMS IN THE FRONT OF THE STORE, UNTIL...


YOU MEAN TO TELL ME I WILL HAVE TO WALK MY URINE SAMPLE PAST THE PRODUCE TO THE HEALTH CLINIC?
OH! I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT!
SO, WE MOVED THE BATHROOMS RIGHT NEXT TO THE HEALTH CLINIC
BATHROOM
HEALTH
CLINIC
COOPS CAN ACTIVATE COMMUNITY GIFTS AND TALENTS TO RELEASE COMMUNITY POWER
LISA, ONE OF OUR CASHIERS WHO GREW UP IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, IS A STRONG BELIEVER IN INCREASING ACCESS TO FRESH FOOD.
LISA
SHE WAS RECENTLY INTERVIEWED BY OUR LOCAL PAPER AND HER SENSE OF PRIDE AND OWNERSHIP of SHAPING THE DIRECTION OF THE MARKET WAS AMAZING
PLACE MAKING WAS ALSO A HUGE PART OF EMERGING COMMUNITY POWER
THE MARKET IS A 3RD SPACE, A CATALYST FOR A MORE BELOVED COMMUNITY.
A SPACE TO BUILD DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS AND ACTIVATE COMMUNITY GIFTS, TO EMERGE COMMUNITY POWER THROUGH OUR COLLECTIVE SOCIAL WIND
OUR GIFTS
OUR TALENTS
OUR RELATIONSHIPS


TWO STORIES, ONE ABOUT
Co-Creation,
AND THE OTHER ABOUT
Centering Expertise.
AS TOLD BY STEVE KROEGER 2023
HI! I'M THE AUTHOR'S GRUMPY COMIC DOUBLE
AND I'M BUDDY BOO A CO-CREATION OF THE AUTHOR AND HIS TWO GRANDSONS
THE FIRST STORY IS ABOUT ACTION-BASED CO-DESIGN OF A PROGRAM SERVING STUDENTS.
WE WERE MOVING THE PROGRAM TOWARDS A FOCUS ON SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE DIRECTOR AND THE STUDENT TEACHERS WERE FULL PARTICIPANTS.
WE USED AN IMPROVEMENT SCIENCE PROCESS THAT IS PRACTICE-BASED, WITH A LOGIC OF TRY-SOMETHING-AND-THEN-STUDY-IT.
THE SECOND STORY IS ABOUT CENTERING COMMUNITY EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE—IN THIS CASE A DEEPLY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
COMING TOGETHER FROM SEVERAL DIFFERENT COUNTRIES WE USED OUR MOTHER TONGUES TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING.
ARBITRARY CONTROLS CAN SILENCE THE OTHER. WE TOOK STEPS TO DISRUPT THAT CONTROL.


WE USED A PDSA PROCESS TO CREATE A MAJOR SHIFT IN OUR TEACHING PEDAGOGY
WE ENACTED LESSON PLANS AND CAREFULLY OBSERVED HOW OUR STUDENTS RESPONDED.
by Steve Kroeger '23
OBJECTIVES + PREDICTIONS
PLAN
DATA COLLECTION
CARRY OUT PLAN + DOCUMENT
DO
LOOK FOR THE UNEXPECTED
ANALYZE
STUDY
SUMMARIZE
ACT
MAKE CHANGES
THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER, WE ASKED 3-QUESTIONS
WHAT DID WE LEARN?
WHY WAS THAT IMPORTANT?
WHAT DO WE BRING FORWARD?
RESPONSES TO THESE QUESTIONS HELPED US TRANSFORM WHAT WE TAUGHT AND HOW WE TAUGHT IT
THE PDSA CYCLE IS DESIGNED TO DO SOMETHING AND THEN STUDY IT
THE STUDY PHASE IS ON THE BACK SIDE - LEARNING IS PRACTICE-BASED
TAKE SMALL STEPS INSIDE A LARGER SYSTEM AND BEGIN TO LEVERAGE CHANGE
WE WERE LEARNING AND TEACHING ABOUT SELF-DETERMINATION
BUT HOW DO YOU TEACH SELF-DETERMINATION IF YOU DON'T EMBED IT IN HOW YOU TEACH?
OUR STUDENTS WERE IDENTIFIED WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES AND THEY HAVE OFTEN BEEN DENIED OPPORTUNITIES TO SELF-DETERMINE.
THINK ABOUT IT ... TEACHERS ARE TRAINED TO DELIVER CONTENT.
WE WEREN'T TAUGHT TO SUPPORT STUDENTS TO DEVELOP MEANINGFUL LEARNING GOALS FOR THEMSELVES
WE HAD TO RETHINK EVERY THING WE HAD BEEN TAUGHT IN ORDER TO CHANGE!


SOMETIMES WE CONTROL NARRATIVE AND DIALOG THROUGH ARBITRARY DECISIONS ABOUT WHICH LANGUAGE IS CONSIDERED STANDARD
by S. Kroeger '23
IN A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY COURSE IN THE FALL, HALF OF THE STUDENTS WERE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES
INDIA, MALAWI, GHANA, LEBANON, BANGLADESH, CHINA AND THE U.S. WERE REPRESENTED
AS PART OF THE COURSE, WE WROTE VIVID THICK DESCRIPTIONS OF AN IMPORTANT EXPERIENCE IN OUR LIVES
WRITING IN ONE'S 2nd, 3rd LANGUAGE CAN BE CHALLENGING
SO WE ALL CHOSE TO TELL OUR STORIES IN OUR MOTHER TONGUE
WE AGREED TO READ OUR STORIES IN OUR FIRST LANGUAGES AND RETELL THEM IN ENGLISH
IT WAS A POWERFUL EXPERIENCE FOR ALL OF US.
WATCHING THE READERS WATCH THE REST OF US LISTEN WAS MOVING.
I FELT LIKE I'D BEEN TRANSPORTED TO EACH OF THEIR SCENES.
I CRIED WHEN I READ MY OWN DESCRIPTION


IN EVERY CASE, OUR MULTI-LANGUAGE ARTIFACTS CULTIVATED DEPTH OF UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OF OUR COURSES OF STUDY
IT WAS AN ACT OF AGENCY, LIKE JAMILA LYISCOTT SAID IN HER POEM 3-WAYS TO SPEAK ENGLISH
KNOWING YOUR INTEREST IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND TRAUMA IS ONE THING,
BUT HEARING YOU DESCRIBE YOUR CHILDHOOD DURING A COUP DE'TAT WHERE YOU WERE SCARED, ALONE, SEPARATED FROM YOUR FAMILY AND SAW PEOPLE KILLED.
IS QUITE ANOTHER
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IS ONE THING, BUT HEARING A STUDENT DESCRIBE WAR...
AND HOW EXTERNAL INTERESTS CAME AND REBUILT, BUT IGNORED THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED THERE, IS ANOTHER
OUR FIRST LANGUAGE DESCRIPTIONS CHANGED US
THE STORYTELLERS CHANGED AS THEY SPOKE. OUR COMMUNITY GREW AND WE LEARNED FROM EACH OTHER.
THE LANGUAGE WE USE, THE WORDS, THE INTERPRETATIONS, THE TONGUE, ARE ALL CRITICAL TO THE TELLING.


WHOSE KNOWLEDGE COUNTS?
4 REFLEXIVE LETTERS ON PURSUING KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH
as told by Alfredo Ortiz Aragon
LAKE OF TRUST, EMPATHY, RELATIONSHIP
IN 2022, ATD 4th WORLD ASKED ME TO WRITE AN ARTICLE ON KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY
ATD? KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY?
ATD FIGHTS POVERTY BY WORKING DIRECTLY WITH PEOPLE LIVING IN THE WORST ECONOMIC CONDITIONS
NO HELP
NO SAFETY
NO JOBS
NO HEALTH
NO MONEY
NO FOOD
I WROTE A LETTER TO 3 FRIENDS ABOUT CHALLENGES WITH CENTERING COMMUNITY VOICE IN AR. I ASKED EACH TO RESPOND
SOUNDS GOOD
BY WHEN?
WILL DO?
JUAN Carlos
Catalina
Ian
WHAT CHALLENGES?
JC AND I ONCE HAD AN UNEXPECTED REACTION FROM LEADERS OF A CBO WHEN PRESENTING RESULTS FROM AN AR PROCESS.
WE HAD CREATED A FANTASTIC REPORT FROM OUR WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS!
A+B+C
= THEY NEED MORE PRAXIS & PROCESS CONSULTING!
WE PRESENTED OUR FINDINGS...
THIS IS WHAT WE LEARNED FROM OUR SHARED PROCESS
THOUGHTS?


DO YOU MEAN YOUR PROCESS OR OUR PROCESS???
WAIT A SECOND
WHAT IS HAPPENING?
WE HADN'T BUILT STRONG ENOUGH RELATIONSHIPS FOR THEM TO TRUST THE LEARNING THAT CAME OUT.
SOUNDS LIKE POOR RELATIONSHIPS LED TO POOR KNOWLEDGE
JUAN CARLOS' LETTER WAS ABOUT A CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS HE FACILITATED BETWEEN 4 AMAZONIAN COMMUNITIES THAT SHARED A LAKE RICH IN FISH
LOOK HOW MANY FISH!
WHOSE FISH?
NO FISH!
MY FISH
ALTHOUGH THERE WERE LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES, HE KNEW TO ALSO FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS.
what about my community makes me proud?
what makes me unique?
what is the story of my name
what do I love and hate about fishing?
HE USED MAPPING SO PEOPLE COULD EXPRESS THEMSELVES VISUALLY AND NOT ONLY VERBALLY
CATALINA USED VISUALS AS WELL TO HELP PEOPLE EXPRESS THEIR INNER COMEDIAN
HA
HA
HA
Two People walk into a...
THEY DID CARTOON STORYBOARDS TOO, WITH FEMALE HEALTH WORKERS IN RURAL INDIA TO DESIGN PHONE APPS TO HELP THEIR WORK.
SHE DISCOVERED THE CREATIVE METHODS SOMETIMES FAILED TO INCLUDE THE WOMEN'S WORLDVIEWS
THEY OVER RELIED ON EXTERNAL FACILITATION
Follow these 15 steps for your prototypes.
How many steps?
Prototypes?
ONE MORNING, A PARTICIPANT ARRIVED WITH A POSTER SHOWING AN ELDER WOMAN READING A YOUNG WOMAN'S PALM, A PATHWAY TO HEALTH, AND AN IMAGE OF A HAPPY FAMILY AT THE END
Let me tell you how to live a good life
Exercize
EAT WELL


THIS HIGHLIGHTED CULTURAL WISDOM AND MEANINGS ATTACHED TO FOOD CHOICES AND SHOWED THAT HEALTH WAS TIED TO FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
SEEMS IMPORTANT FOR DESIGNING A HEALTH APP
IÑIGO'S LETTER FOCUSED ON HOW AR FACILITATORS USE EMBODIED METHODS TO BECOME PART OF THE CHANGE WE SEEK FOR OTHERS. HE SHARED THIS PICTURE.
Pema Chödrön
WE WORK ON OURSELVES IN ORDER TO HELP OTHERS, BUT WE HELP OTHERS IN ORDER TO WORK ON OURSELVES
IN A PROCESS CALLED MEMORIALAB, THEY USE METHODS THAT ALLOW THE BODY TO SPEAK, TO PROCESS TRAUMA FROM CIVIL WARS AND CONFLICTS
EXPERIENCE WITH TRAUMA IS NOT SEPARATED INTO RATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL THOUGHT AND FEELING, BUT IS HELD IN THE BODY.
IN ONE EXERCISE PEOPLE ACCESS KNOWLEDGE FROM DIFFERENT ROLES PLAYED IN CIVIL CONFLICT
ROLE EXPRESSION EXERCISE...
Why me?
Keep it to yourself
VICTIM
WITNESS by stander
DEFENDER
PERPETRATOR
They deserve it
We'll get you back
AT ONE POINT, A PARTICIPANT STRUGGLED
I CAN'T ACT OUT THE ROLE OF VICTIM
SO, IÑIGO ACCOMPANIED HER TO THAT ROLE AND THE GROUP HELPED HER WITH LANGUAGE
VICTIM DOES NOT DEFINE ME
I AM UPSET THIS HAPPENED TO ME
I WON'T VICTIMIZE OTHERS
OUR LETTERS TAUGHT US ABOUT WORKING TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY
INVITE CO-CREATION AND CO-CONTROL
PLACE YOURSELF IN THE PICTURE
CENTER PEOPLE, THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES
WE ARE IN CHARGE
WE ARE PEOPLE FIRST
INVEST IN CARING RELATIONSHIPS

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