

GMCVO

Knowledge



Greater than the sum of its parts: What works in sustaining community-university partnerships

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Greater than the sum of its parts: What works in sustaining community-university partnerships

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1. Introduction

1.1 Community-university partnerships and this report

Recent years have seen an increase in partnership working between sectors, for example between the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the public and private sectors. The VCS is increasingly being seen as an attractive partner in the delivery of services, for example. An iteration of this trend is the involvement of VCS organisations (alongside statutory agencies and other community partners) in what have become known as community-university partnerships (CUPs).

We define a CUP as a relationship in which anyone from the community who is not at the university collaborates in some shape or form with someone from the university who is acting as a member of the university, and not as a citizen in some other capacity. In this report, we are taking this fairly wide definition and looking at what characterises such partnerships, how they benefit partners, the challenges they face and to what the future might hold for this type of partnership work.

This report will give an overview of the findings from this study and will be of interest to VCS organisations, universities, statutory sector organisations, funding bodies and academics.

The report begins with a discussion of the methodology used and the composition of the case studies, which formed the bulk of the sample of the study. We will then look at various factors related to the emergence of the CUPs in our sample, followed by an examination of what enables CUP working on a day-to-day basis.

The Obstacles and Strategies section looks at common obstacles partners in CUP working faced on a day-to-day basis and which strategies they used to overcome them. We then turn to the question of identity in CUP working and continue with a chapter on the impact and benefits of CUPs, including a sub-section on learning.

The report concludes with a look at the future of this type of partnership and makes specific recommendations for each of the key partner groups.

We recognise this is a lengthy report so we have constructed it so readers can pick and choose to read the sections that suit their interest. Each chapter is self-contained to some degree and summarises its key findings and the key messages that emerge.

1.2 Background and project aims

Susanne Martikke is the lead author of the report and in her own practice as a researcher at GMCVO has observed a notable increase in queries from academics

trying to get in touch with community partners and/or expressing interest in working together on something. GMCVO itself has had various experiences of what has now been termed CUP working in the past – including joint events, knowledge transfer activities, student placements and collaboration in research. GMCVO is also a founding member of the UK-wide Community Partner Network and runs its own Greater Manchester Third Sector Research Network.

It is in this context that GMCVO was approached by Professors Angie Hart and Andrew Church from the University of Brighton about the possibility of working together in our own CUP to conduct a study of CUPs from a community perspective in spring 2013. The study is part of a larger ESRC-funded research project into collaborative research between universities and communities, *Imagine* (www.imaginecommunity.org.uk). There was a specific goal in the *Imagine* project to undertake this study of CUPs as a collaborative enquiry between a community researcher and academic researchers to ensure different views and ways of working were integrated into the report. All authors contributed to:

- Scoping the project
- Preparing interview schedules, information sheets and other data collection methods
- Liaising with related projects, the findings of which have also been incorporated into this project (e.g. the Cupp research mentioned below)
- The community researcher Susanne Martikke undertook the data collection
- Professor Angie Hart was interviewed as part of the study
- Professor Andrew Church led on the ethics approval process
- Professor Angie Hart led on liaising between this project and the wider Imagine project
- Community researcher Susanne Martikke led on data analysis
- All authors contributed to writing this report, with the lead being taken by Susanne Martikke
- All authors are contributing to sharing the results of this study

The aims for the research presented in this report were as follows:

- Examine the key features of Community University Partnerships (CUPs) Identify the degree to which they have developed into Communities of Practice (COPs).
- Identify how the partners learn from each other in CUPs.
- Critically explore the extent to which universities are hostile or enabling working environments for CUP working.

- Examine partner views on the future of CUPs and understand the processes that make CUPs resilient in the longer term.

A COP for this project is defined as a group of people who interact regularly because they have a passion for a shared interest. The aim of their interaction is developing knowledge around this common concern.

This fits with the definition developed by the architects of the COP approach:

Community of Practice (COP) is a group of people who share an interest. The group may evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular topic, or it can be created specifically with the aim of developing knowledge around a common concern. It is via the process of sharing information and experiences within the group that the members learn from each other, and have an opportunity to develop their own knowledge and skills.¹

It was envisaged that the study would also play a part in answering some of the broader *Imagine* project research questions which were:

- i. How can Connected Communities (CCs) be conceptualised, researched and promoted, so that they have the potential to accommodate and benefit from social, cultural and economic differences and diverse opinions and practices?
- ii. What does the record of civic engagement (understood in its broadest sense) to date tell us about how and why the social, historical, cultural and democratic context matters to the degrees of success achieved by projects that aim to build CCs?
- iii. Within the process of promoting engagement in community initiatives by as wide a range of social groups as possible, can imagining better futures play a role in capturing and sustaining enthusiasm and momentum for change, and if so, what is that role?
- iv. Is the landscape of community research being transformed by developments in the research methodologies employed in the arts and humanities and social sciences, particularly the promotion of co-produced research and creative, collaborative, participatory and inclusive methods?

2. Methodology

¹ Lave, Jean; Wenger, Etienne (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0521423740. <http://books.google.com/?id=CAVIOrW3vYAC>. ; first published in 1990 as Institute for Research on Learning report 90-0013

This chapter describes the data collection methods used in the study and reports on how we went about undertaking the project. We obtained ethical clearance for the project from the Research Ethics Committee in the School of Environment and Technology at the University of Brighton.

2.1 Data sources and analysis

The study gathered data in three principal ways:

- Qualitative interviews with university staff and community partners from 23 CUPs across England and Scotland
- Three focus groups with community partners
- Memory stories provided by community partners and academic staff involved in CUPs
- Access to data from ongoing research about Brighton University's Community University Partnership Project and the Future of CUPs

We opted for this combination of different ways of collecting data, because we wanted to give a maximum number of CUPs the opportunity to be included in the study, as well as to tap into other ongoing research and consultation processes in the public engagement arena. These included the UK Community Partner Network consultation, University of Brighton's Cupp Ten-year anniversary consultation and the NCCPE consultation on the future of the engaged university.

Twelve of the interviews were conducted as paired interviews in that both the community and the university side were represented in the interview. This enabled observations of the interaction of the two partners during the interview and allowed certain conclusions about the enactment of the partnership in practice. The rest of the interviews were with individuals who were either community partners or academic partners. However, of each partnership, both sides were interviewed, in order to ensure that both versions of the story could be heard. All interviews were transcribed (see Appendix A for a copy of the interview guide). In recognition of the fact that the findings of a study like ours would be of interest as a learning resource, we originally wanted to allow participants to choose whether or not they wanted to stay anonymous and a fair number of them chose this option. However, enough participants chose to be anonymous to make it quite complicated to combine both in the same report at the same time preventing identification by inference. Therefore, in the end we opted for complete anonymisation. However, the case studies associated with this report won't be anonymous and therefore will allow interested parties to get in contact with CUPs.

Not all community and academic partners interested in participating in the study would have been able to give the amount of time the interview process required. Therefore, 17 community partners and academics that were different from the ones who were

interviewed for the project were invited to write memory stories. Other than an interview, a memory story is completely anonymous, giving authors more control over their story and more freedom of expressing their feelings and thoughts.

Susanne Martikke, the researcher who carried out the data collection is involved in the UK Community Partner Network (UKCPN, for more information please go to <https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/work-with-us/uk-community-partner-network>) and as such had the opportunity to collect data at three focus groups that the UKCPN ran to consult with community partners about their support needs with regard to working with universities. The majority of the 17 memory stories were written by focus group participants prior to the focus group discussion. In addition, a few memory stories were solicited from community partners and academics who had expressed an interest in participating in the research, but who could not be interviewed for the project for various reasons.

The instructions for both groups of memory story authors were the same and asked them to write a simple story about *A moment when I felt I really learned something as a result of the community-university partnership I'm (I was) involved with* (see Appendix B for a copy of these instructions).

The sample for the interviews was recruited partly based on pre-existing knowledge within GMCVO and the UKCPN, but the overwhelming majority of interviewees got in touch in response to a call posted on the GMCVO website (see Appendix C). From this initial list a selection was made that reflected different types of partnerships in different areas of the country. We wanted to include a diverse set of partnerships, but also select the case studies that seemed to present the most potential for yielding principles of successful partnership working, as well as inspiration.

Although we realise that community partners could also be based in private sector organisations, we decided to include only public sector and voluntary sector staff, because private sector links with universities tend to be driven by different priorities (i.e. knowledge exchange and profitability) and universities fund these activities in different ways to CUPs and often at a much larger scale. As Laing and Maddison (2007) argue “there is an absence of established models for how to do this kind of work with the public, and particularly the community and voluntary sectors, and with social enterprises.”²

All data was coded using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software Nvivo. The coding framework was partially inductive and partially emergent. The data was coded according to broad themes that we had used to structure interviews, such as getting started, working together, impact and benefits, as well as the future of partnership working. Other themes such as identity and belonging, power, expectation and idea generation emerged from the data. Cases were also classified using attributes

² Laing, S. and Maddison, E. (2007) “The Cupp model in context,” in: Hart, A., Maddison, E. and Wolff, D. (2007) *Community University Partnerships in Practice*, Niace, Leicester, chapter 1.

such as age of CUP, lifecycle stage³, main engagement mechanism and topic of CUP. CUPs were classified using the University of Brighton 7 dimensions of engagement.⁴ Within this, every partner was classified according to sector origin, career stage and rank, gender, as well as whether they were the initiator or recipient of engaging with the other partner. Their experience in partnership working prior to the CUP under study was also logged. This allowed us to investigate whether the way a partnership unfolds is influenced by any of these attributes. It specifically allowed comparing the views of community partners with those of academics and comparing CUPs of different types to each other.

2.2. Sample details

Community partners in the study range from individuals from the community to VCS to statutory organisations. We were interested in examining the variety of CUPs that have emerged. The following details show how we managed this. Table 1 gives an overview of the 23 case studies. Case studies have usually been assigned to one category. Where case studies were deemed to sit across categories, the miscellaneous label was used.

Table 1: Partnership Demographics

CHARACTERISTIC	NUMBER OF PARTNERSHIPS IN STUDY
Age of CUP	
Less than one year	3
Just over a year	3
Several years	7
Ongoing ⁵ and more than several years	9
Not applicable (project completed)	1

³ The stages were formation, expansion, ambivalence and re-invigoration, as proposed in Dhillon, J. (2005) "The rhetoric and reality of partnership working," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* Vol. 29, No. 3, pp 211-219.

⁴ Hart, A., Northmore, S. (2011) "Auditing and Evaluating University-Community Engagement: Lessons from a UK Case Study," *Higher Education Quarterly* Vol. 65, Issue 1, pp 34-58.

⁵ This is used where CUPs have been around for so long that it was difficult to pin down where the CUP began and when, if ever, it would end. It appears that these have just become an integral part of the fabric of how work is done.

Subject Domain	
Arts and humanities	4
Criminal justice	3
Education	3
Health and social care	6
International development	1
Urban planning/regeneration	2
Miscellaneous (CUP does not have one specific subject)	4
Main Engagement Mechanism	
Community development	3
Staff volunteering	2
Networks	2
Research	7
Linked to a Research Centre	3
Student placements	3
Training	1
Miscellaneous (CUP uses various engagement mechanisms)	2

As the above table shows we included as diverse a range of CUPs as possible in terms of partnership age. We wanted to include a sizeable number of partnerships that had been in existence for a while in order to draw out some learning from these. However, it also seemed important to capture CUPs that were younger and had just been formed, in order to see what issues played a role in different stages of partnership working.

The subject domains of the cases reflect areas in which community partner organisations make an important contribution in their own right – criminal justice, health and social care, urban planning/regeneration and education. In light of the arts and humanities focus of the overall Imagine study we also included partnerships that worked in the arts and humanities.

The sample also contains four CUPs in the miscellaneous category. These are CUPs that use student placements whose focus differ depending on the host organisation and one CUP that uses a consultancy approach to respond to a wide range of community partners' needs.

There is a strong research component in the sample, but networks, student placements and staff volunteering were also including, thereby reflecting the most popular mechanisms of CUP working.

An effort was made to include CUPs in various locations, but given the base of the lead researcher there is an emphasis on the North West. The following table gives an overview of where the CUPs were based and at what geographic scale they operated.

Table 2: Partnership Geography

Geographical Location	
North East	1
North West	10
Scotland	2
South of England	7
West Midlands	3
Geographical scope of work	
Neighbourhood	1
Local	9
Regional	2
National	8
International	3

The majority of community partners, 17 out of 26, came from the VCS and 6 partners from the statutory sector. The study also included 3 individuals from the community closely involved in the development and work of a CUP but who were not affiliated with a particular organisations, including an artist, a service user, and an activist. In three case studies, the complexity of the situation meant it was useful to interview two community partners, which is why the total adds up to 26, rather than 23 (the number of case studies).

Interviewees included a mix of people at different career stages and ranks of seniority, as well as different levels of experience with CUP working. The following gives an overview of different features of the interviewees involved in the case studies and shows about half of interviewees described themselves as new to a CUP as it was their first involvement in such as partnership but others shared previous experience of CUPs.

Table 3: Career Stage and Experience in CUP Working

Career Stage	University Partner	Community Partner
Early career	8	2
Mid-career	8	14
Late-career	4	5
Retired	3	3
Not applicable	0	1
Experience in CUP working prior to entering the case study CUP	University Partner	Community Partner
New to CUP	8	15
Some prior experience	8	9
A lot of prior experience	2	2
Only do CUP work	5	0

3. Getting started

This chapter sets out the factors that determine how partners get into CUP working, such as external drivers for seeking engagement with partners from a different sector, individual motivations for partnership working and personal qualities. It describes how partners in our study met and why they decided to work together.

3.1. Meeting your match

As with partnerships in general, the first step is that of meeting your partner. Although success is often influenced by sheer luck, coincidence, timing and personality, this can all be underpinned by certain external drivers. External drivers are factors that shape change in organisations but are viewed as originating largely from outside the organisations. External forces such as fees rises and league tables mean universities are increasingly judged by their ability to engage with the public and this has generated some funding for CUP work. Funders of both research and higher education have begun to reward evidence of involving those outside universities in anything from research to public events and science fairs. This is seen as part of what is called the impact agenda which requires universities to show the impact of their research on society, economy and the environment (<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/explore-it/what-are-policy-drivers/measuring-impact>). Some funders, including the research councils that support university research, have set aside funding pots that require academics to work with community partners. As a result some universities have responded by making funds available for increased CUP activity.

This image is not mirrored for the community side: VCS organisations, for example, are not rewarded by funders to work with universities, specifically, but as mentioned at the beginning of this report, the sector has a track record in partnership working as such and one could argue that the current economic context certainly produces an impetus to think about how to work efficiently and share resources, including by working with CUPs. (For an overview of external drivers, please look at Appendix D)

As a result of this dichotomy in external drivers, the community often tends to find itself at the receiving end of universities' efforts to create and document their impact, rather than initiating CUPs on its own terms and in pursuit of its own interests. In the current writing about CUPs the question of who starts a partnership appears to be somewhat neglected.⁶ This is problematic because as Glover and Silka (2013) point out, the way a partnership is initiated can be quite meaningful in terms of how power dynamics unfold when working together which shapes what is done in the partnership:

"Failure to devote attention to the question of who starts the partnership ignores important relational dynamics that may actually

⁶ Glover, R.W. and Silka, L. (2013), "Choice, Power and Perspective -- the neglected question of who initiates engaged campus-community partnerships," *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, volume 6.

undermine the stated goals of mutuality, equality and reciprocity in relationships between universities and communities." ⁷

Therefore, our interview schedule included questions about where the initiative came from and many conversations evolved around the way CUPs had started.

Interestingly, in our sample, the direction of initiative in establishing these CUPs is mutual in ten cases, but in the remaining 13 partnerships roughly twice the number of academics than community partners initiated the partnership, so that the community partners felt they were the recipient of engagement. The reasons are probably complex, but one that is certainly very relevant is the inaccessibility of the university to some community partners, as summarised by a community partner who now has a quite successful CUP:

"I mean literally I didn't have a clue ... how we would do this. I mean you know, look at the university from the outside, I'm a sociologist I suppose, so I think Sociology might be the place to go, but actually it might not be, it might be the Urban Cities group, you know, the more you know about universities, the more complex it seems, the more complicated." (Interview with community partner)

How do people find others to partner with, then? This question is probably most usefully examined by looking at those with no prior history of working in CUPs, as it turns out that those with previous experience of CUP working were able to draw on this to generate the new contacts and ideas for their current CUP.

Most of the contacts between academics and community partners who were new to CUPs happened, because someone else introduced them to each other. In other words, their meeting was a coincidence to the extent that it was not a result of an organised brokerage process. Most of the partners who ended up collaborating on a research project, started in this way.

Sometimes events or advertising are used as a way of getting the other side involved, although in our sample this was only the case for CUPs whose main engagement mechanism was student placements.

Some of the CUPs we looked at happened because partners knew each other from a different context and then discover that they can work together as a CUP. For example, the community partner in a research study in the criminal justice area was previously known to the lead academic as a placement organisation, whom she then approached to become a research partner.

⁷ Glover, R.W. and Silka, L. (2013), "Choice, Power and Perspective -- the neglected question of who initiates engaged campus-community partnerships," *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, volume 6, p. 39.

What the examples above have in common is that the relationship with or knowledge of the partner preceded the formulation of a subject for a CUP. There are only a few cases in this sample where a “cold call” approach was used upon identifying the right contact person in the absence of an existing relationship.

Significantly, it does not appear that any of the partners of our case study CUPs met through a systematic process that was administered by their university. Individuals are making a considerable investment of their time to move in circles where the likelihood of connecting with likeminded partners is high. Therefore, serendipity plays a significant role in establishing CUPs, as does academic and community partners’ willingness to engage for the sake of engaging, rather than systematic purpose-driven engagement.

3.2. What determines whether you hit it off or not?

Getting the chance to meet is important, but that alone does not guarantee that a partnership will be the outcome. Timing is crucial in whether a spark is generated or not, as the following example illustrates.

In this case study, a research centre that a charity and an academic set up jointly, came to pass after a brief history of failed connections between the academic and the charity. It took two interested individuals, an inspiring idea and a change in organisational attitude towards research, as the following dialogue shows.

University partner: “there was, from my perspective, an attitude at the charity that wasn’t inviting academics, it was much more geared toward no we’re dealing with families, ... we’re not interested. So I felt the door was a bit closed and then I went on maternity leave, so I was out of circulation. And when I came back I thought ok I’ll start again because I was really interested in the topic.”

Community partner: “I remember you came in and we talked about all sorts of different things and [you were] at the time .. buzzing with ideas and I think you felt that you were in quite a free place at the time having just come back to work, you weren’t sort of constrained by too many other commitments.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

A university staff member who volunteers on the board of a charity also observes a link to timing and serendipity: “... if somebody had approached me personally about another interesting and important opportunity where I felt I could make a difference in advance of that, maybe I wouldn’t be on the board now. So, I think it was quite a fortunate marrying of timings as well.” (Interview with university partner)

As would be expected, another important ingredient in creating a match is personality and communication skills. There are examples in the study where academics approached community members who were quite skeptical of the prospect of working in a CUP. In these cases, it was mostly attitude and personality that won them over.

An artist recalls his first meeting with his future academic partner:

“I was like, oh, no, this is an academic and she’s saying all this stuff ... First of all I thought what am I doing here? ... What is she talking about? But then she had a way of getting the ideas out of me and that’s what I was mentioning earlier: That there’s always some people that make you a bit more inspirational and exchange ideas and I think ... [she] is one of those people that gets it out of me most (laughing).” (Interview with community partner)

A youth worker who was extremely skeptical comments how the first meeting changed his mind: “On that first meeting alone, you could sense ... straight away, that actually these people are not in this research to benefit their self as professionals, they’re in it to get the best for the young people and make a difference.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

A youth worker from another case study describes his first meeting as follows: “We clicked, yeah, to explain what she was doing and we thought, wow! And from that we almost started doing a little bit of a project here, a project there.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

The all-important ingredient of forming a CUP from initial meetings is two individuals who like each other meeting at a time when they – and in some cases their organisation – are ready to engage. The findings above also suggest that there was a certain need for academics to break down dominant stereotypes of academics in order to win community partners over. While it would be possible to create spaces where such encounters can happen, it is impossible to formalize this initial chemistry through systematic brokerage.

3.3. Motivations

Closely related to creating a spark is partners’ motivations as they give insights as to why CUPs started. As might be expected, potential community partners were quite wary of potentially self-serving and exploitative motivations on the part of the academic. This is probably not a surprise, in light of the fact that there is a decided sense of research fatigue in some deprived communities, both local, and communities of interest. There is also plenty of suspicion about “parachute jobs,” with academics parachuting in to collect data only to never be seen or heard of again, as the following quote from a community partner shows

“I mean this area, a lot of universities within reach of it and it’s a quite a visible area and it’s really over researched and over consulted. People are sick of it and, you know, so I didn’t really want yet another team of people crashing on us asking the same questions.” (Interview with community partner)

The question of what motivates the partners in a CUP is therefore an important one. Community partners often cited the credibility of the university; access to expertise and other resources; the potential impact of research with policy makers and the wider community; shared learning; personal and professional development of themselves, fellow staff and service users. One community partner describes the decision to get involved in a CUP as follows:

“It’s very useful for us to learn about research techniques, so although and primarily a teaching and learning organisation, obviously that also involves us learning how to reflect and so I like to pick up any opportunities to work alongside people to learn that, and I think universities have so much good practice. The second is just the drive to demonstrate impact in different areas of life so again although for three years we were funded as an education organisation, we were relatively lucky to keep programmes that didn’t necessarily have, you know, direct job benefits or qualifications benefits, we managed to maintain that.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

University partners mentioned shared learning; making a difference/helping a good cause; the desire for research to be relevant; methodological advantages of co-research; access to local/practical knowledge; professional development of themselves and their students. As would be expected, sometimes motivations for becoming involved can be complex, as is illustrated in the following quote from an academic.

Yes and the idea is to me is that research has to be driven to some extent by real needs in the real world. And it has to have impact in the real world. So it’s not enough that I’m analysing numbers and I’m finding patterns because I enjoy that, it has to have some sort of benefit.At that conference that [my community partner] mentioned...the last section of it was dedicated to family members [service users of the community partner organisation] who talked about their experiences. And I remember driving home after that, I choked with tears, and I came home and for about twenty minutes I couldn’t speak and I made the decision there, that the rest of my academic career would be dedicated to [helping them]. That was just the way I was going to go. So the commitment followed from that, you know, I was kind of an emotional decision but it was also followed by more rational processes. (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Overwhelmingly, it could be concluded from the data that being in it for the money, for career reasons or other ulterior motives is generally frowned upon and not viewed as a useful motivation. Instead interviewees from both sides commented on the importance of shared values in various forms. Here are two examples, the first from an academic, the second one from a community partner.

“Personally as a researcher, you don't just collect information and do nothing with that and choose for your own purposes, people ... have given their time, and for what, for you to just pursue your own personal career through the REF [Research Excellence Framework]? It doesn't work like that, it might do for some people, but for myself, personally my attempt here as a researcher you know, is that this benefits all, not just myself, it's not just about a career pathway for me.” (Interview with an academic)

“I don't jump on a project because there's money in it. It has to be something interesting, you know what I mean? It has to be started by: what can I do, what can give me that motivation to be part of the project?” (Interview with a community partner)

Some participants did comment, however, on how they view money or career-oriented motivations in their potential partners. A community partner whose organisation has a university staff member on the board was reflecting about the pros and cons of requiring the organisation to have someone from a university on the board, in order to cement the relationship: “Well maybe writing in the Memorandum and Articles that you have two members from the university on the board, but then it becomes an obligation and not because they're genuinely interested.” (Interview with community partner) While one would expect this attitude in community-based organisations, academics also commented on this. For example, one academic comments on one of her peers' attitude toward attending a network meeting she runs involving the community:

“Their head of department had said that it would be good for us to get involved in this group and then they were sort of thinking right we need to get somebody there every time, you know, we'll take it in turns, and that isn't the basis on which anybody else attends that group. People attend it because they just want to be there or they're interested not because they have to, so it felt like a bit of a culture clash somehow.” (Interview with academic)

These examples of what appear to be both positive motivations and more questionable motivations linked to personal/institutional gain are perhaps to be expected in any partnership. Whilst these contrasting motivations certainly exist and are often acknowledged, many of the interviewees seem to be quite clear about the fact that what keeps their partnership going is the fact that their motivation for partnering exceeds these instrumental factors. There are only a few partners who attribute their partnerships to the fact that there is purely instrumental mutual gain to the extent that they are a marriage of convenience rather than motivated by shared values.

Key Messages:

There are various drivers for engaging with communities from the university side. However, when academics set out to find community partners, it would be useful to remember that similar drivers do not necessarily exist for the community side.

Similarly, for prospective community partners it would be useful to keep in mind that academics are, to a certain extent, rewarded for engaging with communities. This awareness will strengthen community partners' negotiating position vis-à-vis interested academics.

Personal relationships and networks are crucial in the process of locating a suitable partner. It is therefore highly recommended for academics and those within the community who are interested in partnership to become involved in networks that increase the likelihood of meeting likeminded individuals from "the other side" and to build relationships prior to entering a formal partnership.

The all-important ingredient of forming a CUP from initial meetings is two individuals who like each other meeting at a time when they – and in some cases their organisation – is ready to engage. There was a certain need for academics to break down dominant stereotypes of academics in order to win community partners over. While it would be possible to create spaces where such encounters can happen, it is impossible to formalize this initial chemistry through systematic brokerage.

Among the partners in our case studies there also seemed a decided disregard of instrumentalising CUPs. Instead of mutual instrumental gain, shared passion and motivation were emphasized. In order to strengthen CUPs it is therefore crucial to find out where shared values lie.

4. Making it work -- Working together on a day-to-day basis

Once the spark for partnering has been generated, it can still be a complex process to actually settle into a routine of working together. This section will look at the various elements of making CUPs work successfully on a daily basis.

The factors that enable CUP working can be divided into two types, external (i.e. funding environment, support of partners by their home organisation, etc.) and internal to the partnership (i.e. personality and commitment, networks, assets and skills, mutual benefit). This chapter first outlines the factors inherent in a CUP – leadership and clarity of communication – and then looks at funding and organisational support as success factors that are external to the immediate partnership. However, it should be noted that this separation is not a strict one as both these spheres influence each other.

4.1. Leadership, trust and commitment

People were very vocal on the issue of internal enabling factors and at the top of the list of factors were, again, personality, along with commitment, leadership and trust. In most cases this appeared to be about the personal commitment and dynamism of individual academics or community partners. Only rarely was institutional leadership mentioned. Across the cases, the researcher who undertook the interviews was very impressed by the level of personal long-term commitment that was displayed by partners. It was quite common for university partners to put in significant extra time in order to make things happen. In academic writing about partnerships it is stressed that leadership is crucial in order to take something that originates as an idea forward⁸. At the same time, it is important to find the right balance between leadership and involving both partners equally. However, it was notable that in relationships that were based on trust, partners trusted each other's ability to get on with things, without double-checking everything with the other partner.

With so much emphasis on individual leadership, one community partner was wondering how secure the foundations of CUP work are if individual leadership is not backed up by institutional support: "a lot of it ... is dependent on there being someone within the university who is passionate about the work and the partnership, and you can somehow find a way around some of the technical difficulties like funding." (Interview with a community partner). In this context, people who had an understanding of both sides of a CUP, so-called 'boundary spanners'⁹, seemed particularly crucial. They were able to facilitate communication and understanding across institutional cultures, based on their experience, and thus prevented misunderstandings and conflict. Particularly, if

⁸ Hart, A. and Church, A. (2012) 'Research leadership for the community-engaged university: Key challenges', *Metropolitan Universities: An International Forum*, 22 (2) p. 45-64

⁹ Wenger's 1991 definition is mentioned by Hart and Northmore. According to this boundary spanners are individuals who "can broker relationships and act as interpreters between partners." Hart, A. and Northmore, S. (2011) *Gateways* Vol. 4 (2011), p. 1-11.

someone is involved who has prior experience with partnership working that is a very helpful ingredient of successful CUPs, because this person can be an advocate for both sides. One academic with a lot of prior experience described her approach as follows.

“I do have a model, that ... I pulled out of my experience over the years. What kinds of things make for an effective partnership working, and what causes the problems? How do you address the problems, and how do you maximize the benefits of partnership working? What is the worst thing of all for me is partnerships that just have the name ‘partnership’ but are very tokenistic. For me that means nothing. It’s about how to have partnerships that are effective and meaningful. That requires certain things to be in place. It’s easy to ... talk about respect, communications, all of those things ... but it’s difficult to put in practice. And I have some principles of partnership working that I work to, so it’s not, it doesn’t mean that you always get everything right. As I said to you the organisation would say you know our name isn’t up there, or the NGO perspective isn’t strong enough, and then it’s important not to be defensive but to say ‘ok, what do we do about this? Let’s see what we can do to address this’. It isn’t that you will always get everything right, but you have to be prepared to see a partnership, everybody is coming and bringing in something that makes this project work. This project could not be successful without everybody. So then how do you utilize? How do you make people feel valued? How do you support them? ... I have those sorts of principles to work to, and when we set off on a project I would expect people to really stick to those kinds of principles and usually it works.” (Interview with academic)

In the CUP in question here this approach certainly appears to have worked, because the community partner spoke with high regard of their academic partner: “I think she was a king pin if you like, if that’s the right term, she was the one who held it all together and made it a success.” (Interview with community partners)

Although partnership working is in many cases really driven by individual leadership, support and leadership of the home organisation can be helpful in enabling partnership working. Unfortunately, many participants commented on universities’ failure to walk the talk when it comes to enabling partnership working. One community partner commented:

“When you have to take it to the next level, and you need the head of department or you need the vice chancellor ... who speaks all this rhetoric about community university participation, you don’t get the finances and the commitment and flexibility that’s needed to make those things happen at the grassroots. So my anxiety ... is, is it just dependent on passionate individuals within their institutions?” (Interview with community partner)

On the other hand, there are some cases, where the leadership for pursuing CUP as an option came from the institution itself. The initiator of a new research centre in partnership with a statutory partner recalled: “the whole idea for this partnership originated in 2005 when I was at a meeting at the university that involved our deputy vice-chancellor who said that the council and the university both wished to work together on things.” (Joint interview with CUP partners) In this case, this verbal commitment was translated into tangible support: “so that’s why none of my salary’s paid through the Centre, if you like, it comes from, the university pays me, but it seems part of what I do, because the university thinks it’s good thing hopefully. ... There’s been really first class administration from the university for the conference.”

In other cases, the university’s support is more intangible and implicit by allowing flexibility to staff with how they spend their time. A university participant who serves as a school governor puts it this way:

“I’m not sure this is a fantastic example because the university really isn’t doing very much here other than allowing me a lot of flexibility.” (Interview with academic)

Flexibility is also crucial on the community side. A local authority youth worker describes how he manages to reconcile his job role with CUP involvement:

“You are guided by constraints within your own role ... And you’ve got to work with those constraints so as much as I could say I wish I had more time to do this, ... that’s down to my relationship with my work and I don’t think that would ever change no matter what, because my main remit is to support and to do prevention and the other stuff. So actually, having the flexibility to be able to commit an element of time to this [CUP] ... it’s quite a big thing with regards to the authority because, again, they don’t have to let me do that.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

At the moment, it appears that CUPs do depend predominantly on individual leadership, as well as willingness to go above and beyond what would normally be expected to make things work. With so much reliance on individuals, there is the question whether CUP working is embedded enough in an institutional context to be sustainable in the long run. Additionally, is the significant input of time on the behalf of partners recognized sufficiently by their respective organisations to allow for assessing how CUPs fit in with the rest of the workload?

It is crucial that universities and community partner organisations that are interested in reaping the benefits of CUP working create a working environment that is flexible enough for individuals involved in CUP working to feel supported.

4.2. Managing expectations

Another internal ingredient of successful CUPs was the importance of partners establishing expectations at the outset as much as possible, whilst staying open for readjustments and continuous learning.

The manager of a CUP that specializes in art practice observes the following about the need to manage expectations:

“... there’s arts organisations that are quite happy to say ‘yes, write us in,’ because they’re getting money without actually understanding the complexities, the research process they’re going to be asked to engage with and the outputs and outcomes that they’re going to be asked to feed into and I’ve seen it happen, you kind of get a culture clash, don’t you. The arts organisation will be very, very pissed off with the academics; and [the academics] can’t understand why they’re upset. So the cultural clash can be quite significant. So that relationship has to be negotiated quite carefully. And of course because we’re used to negotiate that ... it’s not an issue for us. It is for some of our artists, why do we have to do this? Because it’s about where the funding comes from.” (Interview with community partner).

The policy manager of a CUP that does international longitudinal research reflects on the importance of managing expectations as follows:

“It’s being clear and understanding what the relative strengths of the different partners are, recognizing where people add value, not trying to replace that, and trying to understand the constraints of work as much as possible within the constraints... So I mean it’s back to kind of boring lessons about trying to understand where different people are coming from, recognizing that ... small NGOs aren’t necessarily well versed in research methods, large ones may well be, and so trying to find a way of explaining what research can do and what research can’t do.” (Interview with university partner)

Sometimes what organisations originally had in mind when they decided to join a CUP is not what ultimately is delivered. The quote below encapsulates this:

“If I’m totally honest, we were approached, and somebody said “there’s some money in it for you”. We thought, “We can do that! We can get families [as research participants]! We have families every day! You want families and you’ll pay us to get families?” That was in our minds, to be honest with you, that was as simplistic as it was, and I based it on our previous experiences, working with [other universities] and I just thought “yeah, I can get families to be

involved in this". I'd no idea that it would be so big, so varied, would take us all over Europe, that wasn't even the plan that, we would engage children and young people like we did, that we'd end up at the United Nations!" (Interview with community partners)

It is often impossible to know exactly how a partnership unfolds, especially when research is involved, and therefore, enough flexibility should be built in to allow for readjustments. It is only in this way that the full potential of CUPs can be realised. Generally speaking, it does seem that CUPs need to be given some time to prove themselves. Clarifying how partners expect to benefit from the partnership is also helpful and there tends to be agreement that the strongest bond is generated in a partnership that is based on mutual benefit.

4.3. Funding

Access to funding is, unsurprisingly, an external factor that enables partnership working. One academic reports about the uses of Beacons¹⁰ funding, beyond the merely financial benefit.

"And that was valuable in two ways, one is it was valuable to have the money, though it was only probably £2,000 each time, but it helped to put some money into [our CUP], finance of meetings and publications and things. But also it was valuable for us, for me because it allowed me to make all this activity more public, more formalised. It meant that my colleagues and my bosses suddenly were, 'oh, this is rather good, bringing in some money and gives us a bit of status and prestige, we could put it on the website.' Suddenly what had been regarded as rather distasteful political work was regarded as rather ok. Which is crazy, but that happened." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

However, it is not as straightforward as this and what makes CUP working successful would be more appropriately referred to as the ability of generating funding. At times, it takes much creativity to tap into funding for CUP working, unless the funding source itself requires this approach. In many cases, bits of other funding that partners already have are re-purposed on behalf of the CUP; in other cases it's about pitching the work of the CUP in a way that resonates with those in charge of making funding decisions. In some cases, CUP working, however, leverages the ability to access funding, because partners can bid for two different sets of pots, those for universities and those for the community.

¹⁰ From 2008 – 2011 the Higher Funding Council for England funded six Beacons of Public Engagement, university-based collaborative centres to support, recognise, reward and build capacity for public engagement. The Beacons were at the forefront of efforts to change the culture in universities, assisting staff and students to engage with the public.

The quote by an academic partner below illustrates how complex the funding situation of a CUP that is not funded separately can be.

“The [funding was] coming out of that research centre budget. I think it’s not inappropriate for that to happen, but I guess ... that meant it was quite dependent really on [my academic colleague], you know, happening to have access to that fund and it was not clear whether that fund would go on forever. He just retired and it was clear that it would be problematic for the funding to come from there once he had left. And I suppose we’d have had to make a more formal case for it, so, ... this year the funding has come from a project that I coordinate ... and there’s been some funding, a very small amount of funding to do that and within that very small amount of funding we managed to kind of find the hundred and fifty quid or whatever which we need to keep [our CUP] going ... And the rationale for that, which we didn’t have to make very formally, but [we] discussed it, I guess it’s that there’s been a very, there’s been a kind of synergy between [the CUP] and that broader national project.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

On the flip side, overdependence on external funding was identified by some as a threat to CUP working. One community partner commented: “And I think ... funding does enhance what you can do, but if it’s purely dependent on external funding or additional funding it’s going to end as soon as the funding dries up.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

There is another downside of funding providing the impetus for activities. A few interviewees made reference to the risk of academics and others following the money. For example, one community partner who has been involved with a given local community for a long time observes: “there’s some funding which is specifically for this area, and there’s not a lot of funding around at the moment so what you find is that a lot of organisations appear from the outside, wanting to do projects here suddenly, mysteriously discovering that they really want to work in [this area].” (Interview with community partner)

Funding sustains CUP working, but our interviewees were clear that being overly reliant on funding can also threaten the sustainability of CUPs. Whilst there have been funding sources that support CUP working many of the case study CUPs managed to keep going by being creative about using funding that was not explicitly for CUP working.

4.4. Organisational support

As alluded to before, support external to the CUP from the organisations the partners work for can be crucial in making some resources more readily accessible to the partnership. As one university partner explains: “it’s not about just me as a person, but it’s about who I work for. And so we have resources in terms of rooms, and desk spaces, seminars and money from the university and higher education sphere. So

another thing that I bring is access to resources, monetary resources and physical resources.” (Interview with academic partner)

Another university partner explains the role of allies within the institution: “we’ve also had very supportive deans here and I think that they know that because we work in the main with very small organisations that they’ve agreed that if we have small amounts coming in you know maybe either under five or ten thousand pounds we don’t put university on-costs on, so that’s been something that’s been agreed for many, many years now.” (Interview with academic)

In two cases, universities made funding available to tide CUPs over a difficult financial period. The director of an independent charity facilitating student placements recalls: “we really had a crisis when that coordinator left and we had nobody in that role and so myself and another of the trustees took on that role for a short period of time on our own and then the university brought in C.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

A CUP that used to be firmly within the university and then decided to become an independent charity also subsequently received some crisis support: “I think it is a partnership, but [the organisation] runs independently. I’m saying that because if anything happens to the funding of [the organisation], the university wouldn’t say, oh, well, it’s just like our faculty of law needing support, we need to bail it out. I don’t think that would happen. But saying that, when I first took over, the university did give us grant funding for about three or four years and without it we wouldn’t have survived, so they have stepped in when there has been a crisis.” (Interview with community partner)

On the community side, getting the buy-in of one’s organisation is seen as important in order to ensure that the CUP work can actually be of benefit to the organisation in a broader sense: “But being able to show that actually spending a little bit of time doing this can then ... actually enable you to do more than you’d be able to do without having had the research. So staff-wise, it’s helped.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One community partner, who directs a voluntary organisation notes the importance of spreading the benefit around, rather than keeping the work too closely to oneself: “I very quickly realised that this wasn’t about me being involved in this, this was more about the organisation being involved in this.... I know what I’m good at, and some areas of the ... process wasn’t my area of expertise, so what I did do so that the organisation felt it bought in was I brought lots of different staff into [the CUP]. ... I was very clear that all those people who were involved, including the children came to Geneva, children came to Brussels and their family member or their carer, they also came as well. But the staff that had been involved, I think there must be nothing worse than to do a lot of groundwork and watch the CEO go off into the sunset thinking “yeah”. You know, I tried not to do that” (Interview with community partners)

Although at the core most of the CUPs featured in this study are relationships between individuals, where there is organisational ownership beyond the individuals immediately involved, this proved to be a source of strength, legitimacy and continuity for the CUP. Organisational ownership also means that the CUPs’ benefits can be shared across the

organisation and beyond, rather than only accruing to those immediately involved in the work. However, this means that organisations have to be flexible about resourcing CUPs.

Key Messages:

Personal leadership by individual academics and community partners in identifying opportunities and mutual benefits makes CUP working possible. The individuals who took leadership in our case studies often were people who understood both sides of the CUP and were able to negotiate between them. They were also people who took charge when required, at the same time leaving room for their partner(s) to assume responsibility.

In a university context, individual academic leadership often compensates for lack of organisational support and buy-in. The institution relies on individual academics' drive, passion and willingness to work overtime to implement the rhetorical commitment on the ground. Universities need to get serious about honoring CUP work as a distinct pattern of work, factoring in the time needed to get it done successfully and devising organisational processes that enable rather than inhibit CUP working.

Where there is organisational ownership beyond the individuals immediately involved, this proved to be a source of strength, legitimacy and continuity for the CUP and means that its benefits can be shared across the organisation and beyond, rather than only accruing to those immediately involved in the work. However, this means that organisations have to be flexible about resourcing and supporting CUPs.

5. Obstacles

If a supportive organisational environment contributes to successful CUPs then it is not surprising that unsupportive organisations can be a considerable obstacle. Although as far as our sample was concerned a lack of support did not mean initiatives did not happen at all. However, where there was a perception by university partners that their institution was not very supportive, the CUP work has been “flying under the radar” for fear of putting in motion the complicated and cumbersome university bureaucracy or of exposing oneself to funding cuts or other negative repercussions. Whilst this may have short-term benefits, it appears that this might prevent the CUPs in question from realizing their full potential.

5.1. Organisational culture

Organisational culture topped the list of obstacles to CUP working. Although the university organisational culture poses a more obvious obstacle, the organisational culture of community-based actors can also be an obstacle. Whereas with the university, the inflexible bureaucratic structures are primarily mentioned, within the voluntary and statutory sector, much attention focuses on a lack of understanding of the process and benefits of research process.

One community partner comments on the effort that was required to sort out the contractual side of a research CUP that involved more than one community organisation:

“I’ve been going backwards and forwards because, obviously, they have to draw up a contract with every single one of these organisations. And the legal people-, you know, wanting to change things and tighten things. I’ve got to go back to the organisation and specify outputs which weren’t originally specified. And I still keep getting questions about a particular organisation. And I mean for me it’s all very obvious “but that’s that project up the road, yes we talked about this” but from the outside it must be confusing.”
(Interview with community partner)

Another challenge is the lack of systems to pay community partners in a timely fashion. This can be an obstacle even in universities where CUP work is embedded and generally considered part of the culture:

“It’s a very complex, big organisation and because of the fact of the financial regulation. You know, it’s really about that. I mean nobody is being horrible but we have very, very strict financial regulations, which means we have to do things and what then happens in reality is that people are actually owed money for ages, and it’s all behind. ... it’s about the higher education system and accountancy is what it is, big organisations and what they need to do.” (Interview with academic)

The obstacles stemming from the nature of community organisations were identified by a community partner based in a local authority who refers to the underlying reasons for an apparent lack of interest in university research in his organisation, a tension that had also been mentioned by another statutory interviewee.

“There’s certain elements of the authority that haven’t been as forthcoming to the research ... the fear that the research is going to show that actually they’re not doing the role that they should be doing. ... A lot of the people panic a little, they think this research [the CUP is doing] is here to find out whether we’re doing it, or not doing it; and I’ve tried to negotiate with people to say this is not what the research is about , it’s a knowledge-based process.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

There are other reasons for the skepticism of some communities and organisations based within them towards research. As mentioned above, one of these is research fatigue, as alluded to in the paragraph below.

“We were sending out some consultation stuff ..., some was coming from OFSTED, some was coming from ourselves, ..., and that’s the kind of thing that you know people do get a little bit kind of bored, people receive more questions and more questions. It’s how it’s delivered that I think is important.” (Statutory community partner in joint interview with CUP partners)

Voluntary or community-based organisations also have to be accountable to their service users and one community partner describes the dilemma of justifying CUP work, such as research to them.

“I think people see academia as being up in the clouds and not relevant to their need, particularly if they’re hungry and they have to feed their children, they don’t see the value of why would somebody in a university building [do research] and what’s that got to do with the fact that I can’t feed my children. So it’s trying to get that through, and that they have a voice, trying to give people a voice because often people are just struggling in the middle of it, and feel that nobody’s listening.” (Community partner in a joint interview with CUP partners)

In the face of such cultural differences, good communication between partners is important to prevent such factors from becoming disruptive. Rather than assuming that one's own way of working is that of one's partner, it is usually good to spell out expectations and assumptions clearly to each other in order to build awareness of mutual constraints. Just as communication was important for understanding expectations over mutual benefits it is also important for identifying mutual obstacles.

In the following passage, two partners are reflecting on the issue of communication:

“Community Partner: I think you're right, we do work in different ways, here, than you do and I think my from the outside looking in, it looks like you work in a much more isolated, independent way, whereas here we do have a tendency to work in bigger teams, and that things get passed to a lot of people to get signed and finished, whereas you are quite free to crack on with things. Which sometimes can be quite challenging actually, because you sort of, if you're out of the loop for two weeks, things will change completely, which doesn't happen in the charity because everything is sort of structured in a more, sort of team work sort of way I suppose. So that's been something we're still ironing out, and in some ways it's like who do you communicate with at the charity, who's talked to you, you know, sometimes ... you find out about things by chance, and then it's oh, crack you know, catching up a bit. So that's sort of a bit bitty, but probably as we get into a routine and become more practiced [this will improve].

University Partner: Because I'm also kind of conscious about their time. So one of the things that I found, the conference for example was, ok who do I need to CC into this whole thing, and I started, and I felt that I'm starting to bombard them with questions but I don't need to go through everyone, but then, she didn't know about something that I had talked to somebody else, and I was like, you know, I don't want to exclude anybody, but at the same time, they don't need to get something from me they don't need. How do I judge, that? Do I need to judge that? You know, try to be sensitive but don't want to upset anyone. So at some point I asked K. “do you need to know this?”, and she'll be like “NO, you make the decision”. I was like “Excellent, Excellent, I'm happy to make the decision”. (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Here, open communications and questioning assumptions has enabled partners to define their respective remits and roles. The next quote seconds the need to achieve clarity about how differences can be turned into an asset, rather than presenting an obstacle.

“We are far happier to advocate on something almost based on a gut instinct, which is based on our knowledge too, you’re working in the community and you can see something happening, you’ll have a level of comfort to go and advocate on it or even write about it or speak publicly in the media on it, where clearly a researcher wouldn’t do that, you know, they would say there’s no way you can draw these conclusions. So there have been some times definitely where we probably tested each other areas of comfort, but it’s probably been a mutual thing and over time it’s been kind of respecting what each other does and brings to it...” (Interview with community partner)

Organisational culture both in the university and in community-based organisations clearly puts obstacles in the path of successful CUP working. However, it is also clear from the above that these are in no way insurmountable if communication between partners is honest and ongoing, building mutual understanding, appreciation and recognition of constraints and opportunities. Only in a partnership where communication channels are open can different organisational cultures be transformed from an obstacle into a strength.

5.3. Economic pressures and funding regimes

In any conversation with VCS organisations, especially in the current climate, funding will be first and foremost on people’s minds. In our data, the general economic environment is ever-present and this goes for both sides. Both community and university partners feel that their organisations/their sector is under financial pressure. Furthermore, CUPs as entities in their own right sometimes face the same anxieties about funding as their respective organisations. However, this is understandably particularly salient when the CUP itself started with a funding application, as in the case of a collaboration around student placements and an international longitudinal research study. In our sample, only 7 CUPs began with a funding application, whereas the remaining 16 were continuations of previously established relationships.

Maybe it is then not surprising that concerns about funding did not dominate partners’ thinking across most of our case studies. Also, in the context of the CUPs themselves and making them work, funding was largely mentioned in the context of the exploitation of formal and informal opportunities and future planning. Scarcity of funding was not heavily dwelt on as an obstacle in its own right and in some cases, indeed, CUP working tried to remain as independent of funding as possible, both to avoid the constraints that funding brings with it and for reasons of sustainability. This echoes what has been said in the motivations section, where values were often prioritized over financial benefit.

One theme that runs across interviews is that of universities as businesses, which made it more difficult for university partners to justify involvement in CUP projects without some form of funding. One participant describes the ambivalence about this reality:

“And I think one of the important things for universities ... is that they do see themselves as having that role in supporting third sector organisations in terms of research and evaluation work. For example that ... impact assessment exercise we did wasn't really funded but because I've got a full-time permanent position I was able to kind of free up a bit of time to do that ... But we're then having the debate about that in universities now, because funding is so restricted in universities, probably not as restricted as in the voluntary sector, but when is it worthwhile doing a piece of work which isn't fully costed, should you be doing that?” (Academic in joint interview with CUP partners)

Another university partner who engages in CUPs around evaluation comments on the prohibitive ways that universities calculate their internal costs (e.g. the cost of space in buildings): “so the only project that we've got running at the minute where we've done that, is because we've got a two year project with [two big charities] and we got quite a lot of money for that and that is being done through the university and they cost me, it's a hundred pounds an hour (silence) it's ridiculous! I would never ever charge that to a community group, do you know what I mean, it just means the work is undoable if you do that!” (Interview with academic)

One way of addressing these types of concerns is to cost everything into funding bids that CUPs put together. However, similar to other project funding, research funding procedures are convoluted, inflexible and prescriptive. A university partner who coordinates a multi-site research study in collaboration with voluntary organisations describes the difficulty of planning and costing everything:

“I think it was almost like picking a figure out of the darkness, you know, in terms of the actual sort of number of kind of days, ... First of all do you necessarily know what you're going to be doing, because if it's something like adult learning you don't necessarily know until sort of three weeks before if you're going to be able to run a particular [course], so there's that whole thing. But in addition to that, are you going to sort of spend ages speaking to every single individual who might potentially be involved and pinning it all down to the nth detail when you know that your chances of getting this funding are probably only about 10% anyway...? But then I think because we didn't do that, it's actually made it more difficult to actually do the project because then I've had discussions with the project development officer ... about this now, because the problem then becomes in terms of allocating the funding, the [community partner] allocation, that there isn't anything additional for people who were then helping me do the research.” (Academic in joint interview with CUP partners)

So, this might potentially mean that community partners are not fully involved in the co-development of a bid because they don't receive funds for that, and it may not be possible to directly financially compensate all the individuals involved in helping deliver the project unless this is planned in detail at the bidding stage. This limits the types of community partners who can realistically get involved in CUP working. At the same time, the short-term nature of much of the funding in research might mean that a parachute approach to working with communities is actually encouraged. As one researcher mentions:

“And the other one is just to throw in on this is the funding approach of how we do academic research and they pay us, you get your funding for one year, two years, three years, five years. When that funding runs out, that's it you have to have a period of reapplying all over that period, and then suddenly it's a different set of questions, you can try and fit them as best you can, but it's very hard to do continuous impact with the place that you live, because if they're not on trend for the funding in what you're doing, they'll say 'oh sorry, we're not doing that.' And it doesn't feel sustainable; it doesn't feel a particularly appropriate way of really conducting research with communities, in a beneficial way.” (Academic in joint interview with CUP partners)

Although funding as an issue did not dominate our conversations with CUP partners as much as might be expected in a harsh economic climate, interviewees often spoke about funding approaches and how they influence the type of work that is possible. Because universities increasingly function like businesses, involvement in CUP projects often has to be legitimized by drawing down funding for the partnership. Short funding regimes make CUP working difficult, because they inhibit continuity and force CUPs to operate according to funding cycles. The high transaction cost of submitting a funding application often prohibits community partners' involvement, making true co-production difficult or restricting CUP working to community organisations that have sufficient capacity to get involved. In light of this, it is probably not surprising that many of the CUPs we studied tried to stay reasonably independent of funding altogether.

5.4. Timing issues

Issues relating to time availability and management were a big issue for community partners. Especially for funding-based CUPs the lead-in time could be years, from the initial idea through to the submission of a funding bid and, eventually, obtaining the funding. This time lag, combined with unpredictability of the outcome, is difficult to reconcile with the desire to involve community partners in funding bids from the beginning. Clearly, due to short funding regimes and changing policy agendas, there is always a lot of unpredictability in the VCS as well, so both of these factors make it quite difficult to come up with a definite plan for the CUP. As one community partner puts it:

“It's a very unpredictable programme, so you wouldn't get a huge amount of predictions to what might be able to be studied, so it was

more than likely quite broad ... Because so many funding bids go unsuccessful, you don't have a huge amount of time into structuring work, especially when you're working with vulnerable communities, because you're talking so many years down the line, and you can't really go to those communities and start saying would you like to do this or this, because it may not come to anything." (Community partner in joint interview with CUP partners)

CUP working linked to research is generally acknowledged by academics to be more time consuming than going it alone, but time is also a crucial factor in determining community partners' ability to engage. As has been established previously, there is an element of unpredictability and this extends to uncertainty about how much time each partner will have to contribute.

"Well I'm a little bit nervous ... I think it could be quite a challenging project because there's a whole range of different organisations that are going to be doing quite small projects of their own but we do want them to work together to some extent for us to share ideas. It will develop a way of working as we go along so it is usual for one of these community based projects, it's quite open ended and we don't actually know who's going to be really keen and enthusiastic and how it all develops so I think our meeting next week will be quite critical to engage people and some of them are going to have the feeling they got more ownership, more interest I think in the project." (Interview with academic partner)

The slow pace of academic processes can become an obstacle for CUPs, if they are not taken into account. Timing issues for the community partners in this study included the ones associated with the university bureaucracy, which delayed payments and contract negotiations, but also the time lag between data collection and dissemination, as well as incompatibility of students' timetables with the needs of placement organisations.

Time and capacity constraints are a major concern to CUPs and this appears to be a particular issue for the CUPs that are not funded in their own right. Whilst CUPs often have passionate individuals at their heart who have enough freedom in their job role to dedicate time where they see fit, these often happen to be the individuals who are already under a lot of strain. The CEO of a voluntary organisation who has rolled out a specialised training scheme at universities and is running a network of participating academic staff, commented:

"Time has been really pinched for the last few years and you know it's really difficult. I've toyed with the question 'do I do another network meeting this Christmas?' I've got so much on. You know I started this as a project worker and I'm now a CEO and it's quite, it's time consuming. I guess I'm fairly clear that it helps to look out for any volunteers or someone in the right space at the right time to

help me with these things. But it is a whim and a prayer. But I do think it's important, I think it's really important." (Interview with community partner)

What this illustrates is that CUP working does not take place in isolation, but is usually done on top of partners' ongoing commitments and role. In the case of community partners, it might involve doing research on top of their usual role of service provision; in the case of academics, it takes place in addition to teaching duties and more traditional research. Both partners, therefore, have to be quite clear about how the CUP fits into the rest of their work and what it contributes to their respective mission. With academics, the link between the rest of their research work and CUP activity is often clearer and therefore the risk is not that high, but for community partners, whose resources are much more limited and mainly dedicated to service delivery, the risk of not meeting core activity targets due to involvement in CUP work can be considerable.

However, it appears that engaged academics might do CUP work at the expense of their career progression, unless they are willing to put in considerable extra work. The so-called Research Excellence Framework (REF) which judges the quality of each universities research every 5 years was ubiquitous in the conversations with academics and this is a good lens through which to explore the dilemma of CUP working in general.

As one interviewee from the University of Brighton study to which we had access puts it: "The Academy is not necessarily seeing itself as needing to give society a return on investment but the social contract is shifting for Higher Education in the same way it has shifted for other areas of public funding."

The REF rewards universities for being able to demonstrate that their research has impact in society. In theory this would and does involve CUP working, however, the way this plays out would appear to undermine the very partnership approach that it is supposed to engender: because many of the outputs of CUP work are not considered as valid outputs within the REF framework, the focus remains on peer-reviewed academic articles. Impacts of research that can be described as global is usually valued more highly in the REF than local community impacts even if they make a substantial difference to the lives of individuals. . These aspects of the REF were seen as disincentivising CUP work to the extent that the outputs that might be valuable for the community might not be REF-able. This means academics end up trying to produce yet more outputs including those that are useful for the REF and those of relevance to the community.

As we have seen, CUP working still faces considerable obstacles and heavily relies on the commitment of individuals immediately involved to make it work. The following section looks at some of the strategies partners in CUPs have employed to secure success and sustainability for their initiatives.

Key Messages:

Inflexible bureaucratic structures in universities and lack of awareness to the nature of academic research in community partner organisations are common obstacles to CUP working.

Communication between partners about respective organisational constraints and reasons for these can help to minimize the disruptive potential of obstacles.

The bottom-line has become more important to both universities and community partner organisations in the current economic climate and CUPs are affected by this, unless they are able to make a business case for funding, link into funding that is not primarily designed for CUPs or minimize their dependence on funding.

Both partners should be clear how CUP work fits into the rest of their work and what it contributes to their respective mission.

Funding regimes are not conducive to promoting fair and inclusive practices of CUP working due to short lead-in times and short-term funding horizons.

CUP working usually happens on top of academics' and community partners' day-to-day duties. Therefore, time and capacity constraints present a major obstacle to CUPs that are not funded in their own right.

6. Strategies for overcoming obstacles and dealing with adversity

As mentioned, one very common strategy to deal with adversity towards CUP work from a partner's institutional setting is to "fly under the radar." But as has been pointed out, this might not be the most beneficial way of addressing the situation. The data suggests that there are some popular mechanisms or strategies that case study CUPs employ in order to confront obstacles, but also to transform them and increase legitimacy and recognition for CUP working. These strategies include establishing community interest companies, working through research centres, developing strong partnerships prior to the formalisation of a CUP, formally assessing the benefits and drawbacks of a CUP prior to involvement.

CUPs range from very loose relationships around a common interest to quite formalized entities in their own right. For example, on one end of the spectrum, the director of a cultural charity maintained an informal partnership with a lecturer from the local university, which used the shared interest in sustainable development as an overarching organizing principle for a range of collaborations from events to co-produced research. On the other end of the spectrum was a full-fledged institutionalized research centre on ageing, which cemented the partnership between university and local authority experts on ageing, employing its own staff for public engagement. Formalizing the CUP and giving it its own organisational architecture was one way of facilitating joint work.

For one CUP creating a community interest company was a way of responding to opportunities and managing funds in a more flexible way than would have been possible through the university structure. Several interviewees from both sides of the issue attested to the advantages of operating in this way, for example: "So we did have in our mind it's a place to direct some money in order to be a bit more flexible. So that means, you know, that I can commission a parent to help me deliver a piece of training, and pay them and it's just not a problem." (Interview with community partner) As mentioned before, this also had the advantage of being able to unlock a variety of funding sources outside of the academic realm.

A community interest company to some degree moves control of the CUP outside a University, But establishing a CUP related body within a university can also be a way of making CUP working more legitimate and overcoming certain obstacles often through the activity of a research centre. A number of case study CUPs were operating in the form of research centres that are identified usually by the university partner as an area of research where the university has specialist expertise and a core of researchers. These included research centres that were established mainly for academic reasons but whose way of working over time was very much oriented towards CUP activities and other centres that were set up as a result of CUP working and had a structure by which to draw recognition and resources into the CUP.

Another strategy for overcoming challenges that fits in very well with the context of uncertainty mentioned above is to develop strong relationships between partners before formalizing the CUP. This also allows the testing of certain concepts and ideas, as a community partner, who is director of a museum, suggested:

“I think it’s still in a process of evolution as well, because we have some longer term goals for how we think it might exist. And we were testing those against specific opportunities in order to work out whether or not it’s robust enough to be set against those opportunities. So I think as time goes on, we pause and we seek to define it, so we seek to write it down, test that against a specific opportunity; if it works, great, if it doesn’t then we can pull back a little bit.” (Community partner in a joint interview with CUP partners)

A prominent theme in the CUP literature and in website guidance for CUPs (i.e. Community Campus Partnerships for Health) is on the importance of getting memorandums of agreement and partnership policies in place. However, in our study, partners often found it more fruitful to get on with some actual joint work, rather than spend a lot of time negotiating such agreements – an approach that Hart et al have described as ‘defining it in the doing.’¹¹ Again, this allowed testing of ideas, but also testing of ways of working, getting used to each other and deepening the partnership gradually (boundary objects). Ultimately, this approach can create quick wins and demonstrate the benefits of partnership working. Some participants also implied that this was a way of maintaining momentum in an often slow bureaucratic environment.

“We just did it and waited to see what happened. And there’s a bit of a thing ... about the structure within universities. It is so bureaucratic and stiff sometimes, that it’s better to just get on and do some of this CUP work and wait for people to tell you “you shouldn’t have”, rather than seek permission.” (Interview with community partner)

A crucial strategy for community partners was to do an early formal assessment of the benefits and problems of engaging in a CUP. Some community partners saw this assessment as similar to how they would usually make a decision to become involved in a piece of work or not.

“We always have to make that sort of assessment whether something’s going to be worthwhile you know, especially again from experience it’s always tempting to go for something that’s going to seem as an interesting project but it, there’s always more work than you think there’s going to be, so you always have to weigh up what’s the benefit of linking up and being involved and creating that extra work and the potential that the concern, the worry especially with the communities we work with, and with researchers, is it going to have some negative effect on the normal day-to-day running of

¹¹ Hart, A., Maddison, E., Wolff, D. (2007) *Community-University Partnerships in Practice*, Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

the learning.” (Community partner in join interview with CUP partners)

As the above quote also shows, there is a particular concern among community partners, especially those based with voluntary or statutory organisations, that any CUP work does not interfere with service delivery, but adds value to it. Some of the assessments community partners made to assess the value of involvement in CUPs tended to be around the potential impact on communities. The director of an organisation that was part of a large collaborative research project explained this as follows.

“Of course the academics come in for an interview process and they’re not going to be there the next time that child visits, so the child comes into contact with us as well as the researcher during the interview, so they have someone who they could phone. And that was very much about the ethical footprint of the research, that you don’t just parachute in and get the data you need; that you leave behind a support structure that, when that child has just spent ... an hour, opening up about their deepest fears and issues around this thing that they may have never opened up in that extent before, that conversation is, one, closed down well and, two, that support is in place for that young person” (Interview with community partners)

As we have seen, CUPs employ fairly intuitive and informal strategies and sometimes community partners preferred these to more formal arrangements, despite the fact that they were also wary of the possibility that academics might exploit them. However, many examples in our sample also use approaches that are informed by certain partnership models to frame their CUP. This is what we turn to now.

Key Messages:

The extent to which CUPs are formalized varies widely.

Ultimately, formalisation/institutionalisation can enhance legitimacy and act as a mechanism to draw resources into the CUP.

However, where a CUP still faces much unpredictability and uncertainty, partners often opt for an approach that gradually builds the relationship by generating some quick wins and testing approaches on the way.

7. Partnership models

The study identified the following partnership models, which were used by the CUPs in our sample to organise the work they are doing together:

- Communities of practice and networks
- Brokerage
- Institutionalisation within the university
- Institutionalisation independent from the university
- Staff volunteering
- Consultancy/transactional approaches
- Discrete research projects

It is quite difficult to come up with a reasonable typology of CUPs and for many of our case studies there is overlap between different models. Additionally, CUPs may go through various types of models depending on their stage of development. However, below is an outline of the most salient models that came into play in CUPs featured in our sample.

7.1. Communities of practice and networks

Several CUPs in the study took the shape of so-called communities of practice and/or networks. As discussed in Chapter 1, Lave and Wenger¹² define communities of practice (CoPs) as a group of people sharing an interest, which can evolve naturally or can be specifically convened with the aim of developing knowledge around a common concern. CoPs are a vehicle for developing knowledge and skills through sharing information and experience within the group. The line between CoPs and networks is blurred, but as Hart and Wolff (2006) explain¹³, a key element of a CoP is that members have come together voluntarily with the aim of creating, expanding and exchanging knowledge, whereas members of a network are more interested in receiving and passing on information, as well as knowing who is who. Hart and Wolff argue that networks “exist as long as people keep in touch or remember each other,” whereas CoPs “last as long as there is relevance to the topic and interest in learning together.”

¹² Lave, Jean; Wenger, Etienne (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0521423740. <http://books.google.com/?id=CAVIOrW3vYAC>. ; first published in 1990 as Institute for Research on Learning report 90-0013

¹³ Hart, A. and Wolff, D. (2006), “Developing Local Communities of Practice through Local Community-University Partnerships,” *Planning, Practice and Research*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 121-138. Specifically, see table on p. 131.

We would argue that many of the case study CUPs had elements of a CoP, particularly where partners simply stayed in touch on an ongoing basis in order to learn from each other and explore new ideas and projects. In many cases, the glue that bound partnerships together was an intense interest in a certain subject, which could be seen as a CoP element. The CoP could be seen as a more or less sustainable mechanism of partners from different sectors to come together and maintaining their relationships over time, but also as a nucleus from which new ideas and projects can emerge when appropriate. One CUP that took the form of a community interest company used CoPs as such a mechanism.

“So, as a result of having this big community of practice, we have relationships of people, and they in their own capacity will want to run with an idea and they want us to work with them on it, and we think yes, that fits our mission that sounds good. Or it might be that conversations are happening in the bigger community of practice and we will see a connection with a piece of funding that we could pursue to address that, and it’s all rather organic.” (Interview with community partner)

Another CUP was testing the CoP approach to bring likeminded people into the picture:

Community Partner: So in some ways you could say, yes, a community of practice has built up amongst a number of professionals over time that has become very, very positive, very mutually supportive, very collaborative.

Academic Partner: I found from psychology there’s a lot of egos and a sense of competitiveness constantly. With [this CoP] there isn’t, it’s more about collaboration and actually people want to get together, it’s just sometimes you can’t because of different demands, but it’s not for lack of interest or will. ...

Community Partner: Exactly, the sort of practitioners conferences that ... I might do next year...It’s all about bringing other organisations up to our level, to join our club of people who are interested in [this topic], because we want to be bigger, we want more people to get involved (Joint interview with CUP partners)

As Hart and Wolff (2006) suggest, a CoP is also potentially a good mechanism for CUP working, because it is precisely about bridging differences and respecting different types of knowledge.

The community partner in a CUP-based research centre observes:

“What I really enjoy is we’ve got ... a post doctoral student on architectural theory and she sits down with [a colleague of mine] who left school at sixteen, has worked since sixteen for the council

in community development work; and getting the two of them having a discussion about a social participation and ageing and that transaction if you like, that interaction is hugely satisfying because you've got there's that dynamic relationship going on there." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

The university partner in one of the case studies – a mental health network – reflects on the potential of a CoP to transform learning:

"It's not just bringing service users in to talk to students, or even bringing service users into the university.... It's about just shifting ... where the learning is happening, it's taking it right out of the university; it's putting it somewhere else." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

7.2. Brokerage models

Another popular model is a brokerage model. This model tended to be used in a context where student placements were the primary form of CUP working. Usually, this model is quite formalized and involves employing staff whose role it is to broker relationships. The existence of this person who bridges the gap between the student and the organisation they will be placed in is seen as absolutely crucial. The university-based chair of a scheme that facilitates student placements described the intense preparation and management work that goes into each placement.

"I don't think you can just do that by placing a student in an organisation and hoping for the best. So ... we do try and work with organisations all the way through. So before, when the organisation has an idea, we have a workshop with them looking at how that might be feasible, managing expectations, what that might mean, talking about the ethics and the kind of processes that we have to go through here, and how that fits in and the timetable for students. And our coordinator is in touch with the organisation through the year, and the students go to her if they can't get in touch with the organisation, letting her know and she'll be chasing; she's chasing everybody, sounding out and checking out all the way through the academic year and she only works for two days a week, which does limit our capacity because, unless her hours are increased, we can't provide that community support so we don't want to expand it beyond that." (Academic in joint interview with CUP partners)

A similar scheme, which had run successfully for two decades, but was no longer in existence during the time of the interviews also utilized the coordinator post for educating academics and organisations about the benefits of CUP working.

“Well in the early years it was as much about educating universities and tutors in universities about the possibilities of working with the voluntary sector as it was about educating the voluntary sector about the possibilities in universities. And certainly whoever was running the [scheme] did a lot of work in both directions trying to keep understanding of it and the possibilities on the agenda and would come and talk to students or come and talk to tutors, come and talk to whole department groups and so on about it as well as circulating information. But ... quite quickly it became [a system where] the community and voluntary sector provided basic information that was then communicated to students who then contacted the groups directly so they didn't have to go through the broker.” (Interview with academic)

It is unclear from the data what caused the later demise of the initiative, however, one line of reasoning could be that the absence of a broker was partly to blame and signaled a lack of willingness to make a genuine investment.

However, there are also CUPs that utilize brokers or, as the case may be, community “gatekeepers,” to facilitate the relations between university researchers and community partners within projects. A partner in one of our CUPs commented on the pros and cons of this approach:

“If I come in as an outsider I might be able to achieve something as an outsider or I can just see things slightly differently than an insider, but that means it's quite a good partnership, [the broker] got the inside, I've got the outsider views ... Sometimes an insider can be so we've done that before, that didn't work and sometimes it takes an outsider to say well lets' try it again and see if it works this time. I think it's good combination to have, provided we respect each other and listen to each other and be prepared to sort of give and take.” (Interview with academic)

In other cases, VCS organisations might play the role of gatekeepers or brokers to manage relations between academics and research participants and/or the wider community. For example, there were a number of research CUPs in the sample where the community partner acted as a gatekeeper to facilitate access to research participants. It is noteworthy, however, that their role went far beyond this function to include co-design of methodology, advice on ethical concerns, advocating on behalf of and supporting often vulnerable research participants through the research process.

7.3. Institutionalisation within the university

One way of managing and legitimizing CUP work is through some form of institutionalisation or mainstreaming in the university. For example, four of our case studies did CUP work through the mechanism of establishing a research centre around

this work. In other cases, CUP working led to successfully embedding community-led teaching in universities.

The research centres originated through CUP working, which sets them apart from research centres that consider CUP working as one of the ways of accomplishing their mission. Although research centre sounds very formal, there is actually one example in the study where a research centre is almost a virtual one that serves as a focal point for enquiry into a particular collection of historic photographs and other data. It is not funded, but is simply a focus for ideas around a certain issue, an organising principle. Despite this informal character, it is highly effective in galvanizing interest around the issue in question, drawing in funding and joint academic studentships.

One research centre in the area of criminal justice was established jointly by a charity and an academic around an issue that was underrepresented in research, another was established around a salient issue that was of interest both to academics involved and the local authority in question. Here, the relationships tend to be quite formalized, with a Memorandum of Understanding being in place and community partner membership on the board or steering group. In both cases, there are mechanisms of embedding joint work either through a honorary fellowship for community partners or staff secondments for academics.

One of the centres was established by an academic at a university when student placements which comprised community audits generated demand from the community.

“People started to ask us to do bigger pieces of work, too big for the students to do, so that’s when we got the idea of actually setting up somewhere that could actually do that, and at that time the dean who was here had some bits of money called the dean’s strategic fund and ... she gave me some money which paid for some of my time and also to have a part-time coordinator in here so that gave us the opportunity to get involved with bigger pieces of work.”
(Interview with academic)

7.4. Institutionalisation independent from the university

Four of the CUPs we interviewed for this study opted for institutionalisation outside of the university. One formed a community interest company, three a charity and one a constituted network. Three of these explicitly framed their choice as a bid for independence: “Well we did discuss that with the head of Economic and Social Engagement about whether the university should have a sort of official, whether it should be a spin-out which is where the university still holds some power and control and an identity and relationship to it. But we decided against that because it makes it more free and it is still separate. There can be benefits for the university in this arrangement too as then the social enterprise has access to other funding streams etc.”
(Interview with academic)

A charity that was originally a project within the university consciously decided to sever its links with the university.

“I think in the 80s, the universities went through a bit of a rethink about how they worked and they became, I think, quite elite in the 80s. You know, a bit more removed from the community. You know, and then they changed again and then they wanted to reconnect with the communities. But I think that’s probably sort of why [the charity] wanted to remove its link as much as the university.”
(Interview with community partner)

Being a charity that is physically based in the university, but independent in terms of governance has its complexities but also clear advantages.

“It’s complex, I mean it’s very enmeshed, isn’t it, it’s difficult to disentangle. I think sometimes it’s difficult for the university to completely comprehend that we have a totally independent management committee who will make independent decisions. ... I think in a way, it’s meant that we, because there’s been so much change and so many different agendas coming into play in higher education, particularly around employability, and different kind of funding, that we’ve actually managed to maintain our focus by being independent, in a way that probably we couldn’t have done, had we been integrated totally within the university.” (Academic in joint interview with CUP partners)

The one constituted network, which involves CUP working, was originally established as a community initiative, but reported that the university has been eager to claim the laurels for this work, in line with the current emphasis on public engagement:

“Community Partner: But there’s a live issue which I brought up at a recent meeting of the network a couple of weeks ago, which is as we’re attracting more resources from the university sector is there any risk for [it] in becoming too dependent on the university sector, is there any risk there. ... And we did, we have found recently that some other universities are actually writing about ... it as if it was a university project.

University Partner: Yes, the university is pleased with us, pleased with this collaboration But still we want to prevent this distorted view of the whole network as being a university project because it isn’t, so now we’re very careful how we talk about it and telling people like you very firmly that they’re completely separate organisations which have chosen to collaborate.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

7.5. Staff volunteering

Another model of CUP working, which is very informal, but has the potential to engender some more formal partnerships in its wake, is volunteering by university staff. The two cases of staff volunteering in this study are board membership, in one case of a school, in the other of the charity that used to be associated with the university originally, but then became independent. This charity had a strategy of maintaining its independence whilst promoting good links with the university by recruiting some of its board members from the university. Although the charity is not obliged to do it, this has been a feature for decades, since its independence.

The second case is that of a school governor whose day job is as an academic in the education department of the local university. This academic was approached by the school in question to join their governing body and the resulting relationship has continued for more than a decade now, facilitated by considerable flexibility around working hours. However, more recently, this university has introduced an official programme of enabling staff to become school governors: “I’m in the very privileged position, I’m a director and I don’t have to get too many permissions. ... Other members of staff have to convince their line manager So, with school governors ... we developed our HR policies in the university – and I personally drove this through – to ensure that we give time for staff to become school governors.” (Interview with university partner)

7.6. Consultancy/transactional approaches

As mentioned above, among our interviewees, traditional consultancy and purely transactional approaches were not highly regarded where they existed to the exclusion of genuinely shared interests and personal relationships. In fact, many of interviewees were eager to position their CUP as being beyond such arrangements. In the two quotes that follow community partners reflect on how their CUP differs from others they have experienced.

Community partner 1: “I never really felt valued by [previous academic partners] ..., it was just like ‘there’s a little bit of money, go and produce this report, use some people who are experiencing what you’re researching as researchers and come back and write a report’. ... It didn’t give me the satisfaction that we’ve been involved with something which I know can make a difference.” (Interview with community partners)

Community partner 2: “I think institutionally, I’m quite promiscuous in that sense that I will always offer up my institution in a partnership way if somebody can match the investment that we’re making. I don’t mean that in the money terms, I mean, if I’m saying, you know, I might have lots of conversations with the people in the university and say actually, ok, institutionally we’re prepared to take on this issue, are you? And actually it’s only people like [my

academic partner] that go ‘Yes, I’m up for that!’ Anybody else might say well actually, what I might be able to do is get you to write this letter for me that actually backs up my funding application. That’s not a buy-in that’s actually totally different.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

This is not to say that consultancy approaches do not have a place in the spectrum of mechanisms that enable pieces of CUP work to happen, but it is to suggest that a genuine CUP is seen as something more ongoing and less transactional by people in our sample. Nevertheless, within many of the CUPs under discussion a consultancy approach might be used to enable universities to pay community partners or community partners to commission academics for specific pieces of work. However, consultancy was usually not the overall rationale of the relationship.

For example, a large longitudinal study utilizes consultancy contracts to produce bespoke outputs for the community partners from the data that the study overall is collecting:

“We’re required by our funder not to cross-subsidise, but ... we know our data very well and we have researchers on tempos that we can relatively quickly do small pieces of work. That is not particularly expensive for the organisations that we’re talking about. And so there is a benefit to them. We do a couple of big pieces of work like this a year, so the cost has not put them off ... so I think it’s quite cost effective strategy from that point of view.” (Interview with university partner)

Also, the CUP that operates in the form of a social enterprise is approached for small pieces of consultancy all the time. Conversely, a research centre that relies on community partners as interviewees for a research study, employed these as consultants.

A university-based centre, which focuses on developing evaluations with and for community organisations operates primarily through consultancy, but has provided the impetus for a number of other CUP projects as a result of its connections with the community. The initiative for the CUP projects in this centre comes from community organisations that approach the academic who is operating the centre, who then develops an approach with the organisation and helps them with a funding bid that includes in the cost of evaluation.

7.7. Discrete research studies

Nine CUPs operated as discrete research studies. However, notably, in only one of them was this did the CUP finish once the project ends. However, even this project was aiming to leave a legacy behind in terms of communities of practice in the participating communities.

All the others had either built their research studies on existing partnerships or had developed such close links with their partners that it was almost inconceivable that the relationship would not be maintained beyond the end of the study. This is perhaps due to the complexity of these studies and two factors associated with that:

1. They require a considerable investment of time and resources, which is perhaps mirrored by the investment in the relationship and its continuation
2. Because of the complexity of their research and CUPs, academics prefer to work with “tried and tested” partners.

The complexity derives from the multitude of players who are involved, both from the university sector and the community. Not only do academics and their community partners on the study have to get along, but different community partners might have to work with each other and likewise academics, often from across disciplines, who are not used to collaborating with each other will be working together. Clearly, there are all sorts of complexities that arise from this situation.

As one academic notes: “I think there are a lot of benefits from having so many different partners involved, and that we get a lot of different perspectives etc. but it’s very difficult, there’s a lot of difficulty in managing that.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One academic who primarily works in CUPs describes how she deals with the complexity.

“I believe in paying attention to the social glue, which is making sure that the people are looked after, that they’re fed, that they have whatever they need, that the environment they’re working in is comfortable, and that we’ve paid for it, and we thought of it and we budgeted and it’s not just. And that we respect time, if we start, say we’re going to start on time, especially for the voluntary sector, they have so many competing demands, we start on time. But if they are struggling to be there on time, then how do you accommodate that? Because we have to recognise they have a different set of demands.” (Interview with academic)

Key Messages:

There are various mechanisms to choose from when it comes to finding an appropriate organizing principle for CUPs.

These mechanisms vary with regard to their level of formality and commitment but nearly always add value and longevity to a project.

It is important to explore a range of possible mechanisms before adopting one that is appropriate for the proposed partnership.

8. Identity in CUPs - What does it mean to be part of a CUP?

As one might expect in any situation that involves partnering across different organisational cultures, CUP working triggers quite a few thoughts about identity and what it means to people to work in a CUP, as partners revise perceptions informed by popular clichés through practical experience. This is particularly important in light of the strong feelings that many partners interviewed for this study appeared to have about their partners, as well as their CUP in contrast to other CUPs.

There are complicated interactions between identity and CUP working and below is just a taste of how these issues play out for the partners at an individual level. Data suggests that identity affects how partnership plays out, but partnership working also shapes identity. In other words, partnership working is an experience that has the power of changing those engaged in it and as the findings show below it affects, usually in a positive way, people's values, organisations self-confidence and partners respect for other organisations.

8.1. CUP working as a radical act?

8.1.1. Engaged academics

As has been alluded to earlier, there is quite a lot of personal commitment and leadership invested into CUPs. For many of the academics who participated in this study CUP working seemed to reflect their values, which were in turn quite critical of the academy, but also held that academia had the duty to be accountable and make a contribution to transforming social problems. Many of the academics interviewed emphasized their previous job roles in the community and positioned themselves as different from other academics – in the context of CUP working having a community background is an asset. As one academic put it: “Yeah, so things like that are lovely and so I do it because I enjoy it. You know I'm a youth and community worker so that's why I like doing it but I mean that's not the background of all academics you know.”

It was quite common for people to cast themselves as almost radical, subversive and, in effect, isolated from their non-engaged peers and closer to the community partners. Academics involved in CUPs also tended to feel undervalued and unappreciated, whether that was by their more mainstream colleagues or the principles embodied in the REF.

The following dialogue between an academic and a community partner shows the perception of CUP work being of a radical, almost risky, nature:

Academic: Not an easy job. We need to be employed

Community partner: Yes

Academic: in our respective jobs. Don't go get sacked. Every so often I'll have this terror of getting sacked.

Community partner: So do I. I know, but we have to do those things. (Joint interview with CUP partners)

An academic speaks about how her CUP work affects her relations in the department:

"I've got a few colleagues around the university who I feel an affinity with and we all feel quite marginal, so we have coffee together every so often ... they all support me a lot. Erhm, they're very supportive, these (emphasis) people, so we feel like a bit of an underground movement. But within my department It's not that they're not supportive, but they don't really understand what it is that I do. ... So, there are particular people, individuals, and they all feel a bit like outsiders in their department, so I feel like a bit of an outsider in my department, but that could be my feeling, maybe they do appreciate me, but I feel like they don't quite understand."
(Interview with academic)

One academic who has been a champion for community engaged work most of his career describes his standing at the university:

"For thirty years my bosses had been saying to me, 'you really shouldn't be spending all this time on this rather political work; you should really be getting on with writing papers for scholarly journals, publishing in journals and raising your profile in research or you'll never be promoted to full professor, if you don't stop doing this stuff and concentrate.' So ... that was the atmosphere, so there was some tension between this work and my heads of department and faculty, not my immediate friends and colleagues, but more senior powerful characters." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Ironically, this person's situation with regard to CUP work shifted rather significantly once the university decided to claim ongoing bits of work that could enhance the University's public engagement profile and just recently, this academic has been presented with a Lifetime Award.

Sometimes the perception of not being valued by the academy in turn reinforces a sense of allegiance to "the other side," the community side. One academic was quite adamant about the use of funding she has attracted as her result of working with communities:

“...you know we must have brought in I don't know a million pounds, but it didn't come here. You know the money that I got I costed in ... some time ... but I made damn sure the rest of it stayed out in the community. It all went through other organisations so, but I think if the university had a different view then I would have said, 'yeah great you know let's base it here,' but they'd then have to take on board that they had a different way of costing projects you know not like they do now. It's ridiculous.” (Interview with academic)

8.1.2. Community partners

On the community partner side the story looks somewhat different – community partners don't see themselves quite as much as pioneers or mavericks. For them, institutional support was not as big a topic as for university partners, despite the fact that interviews covered this topic. Among community partners institutional support was quickly talked through, whereas for academics it took considerably more room. Some interviewees linked this to the sort of organisational context community partners work in. For example, they tend to work in smaller organisations – with the exception of local authorities – and their involvement is by definition one that is sanctioned by the organisation. In addition, many of the community partners have assumed an organisational identity, so rather than talking about themselves as individuals, they are talking about “we,” meaning the organisation they're based in.

Many community partners who are based in organisations stressed that they had made a choice of working there, precisely because they feel strongly about that organisation's mission. Therefore, partnering with a university is just another element of taking that mission forward, rather than furthering their individual objectives. Of course, there are still individual objectives and benefits involved, but it appears that these are complemented and underpinned by those of the organisation overall. One of the community partners involved in a European research study talks about her perspective as the organisation's, rather than as her own: “I think ... we're very confident about our subject matter, and we're very confident about the systems that we work with and we're confident to put that across. And so I'm glad that it was [us] that was involved in the research because I think we were able to steer our input to that at a very early stage.”

There were cases where community partners made reference to not being properly valued or understood by their colleagues, but these were in the minority. One community partner who had been involved in a CUP for years voices this side of the story:

“Well, I don't know really what I can say about that, because I don't understand it myself; why [my organisation] don't seem to put as much value on it as I do and as my other colleagues do. I just don't think that they're focused on it in the way that I am focused on it. Because I think it you have university backing for pieces of work that you are doing, it gives the work that you do great, it gives it

weight, I honestly believe it gives it weight and a great deal of credibility. I think my organisation might be rather short sighted to be quite frank about it. So you know, I've done everything I can do ..., I made these partnerships, I've given everything on a plate, I've worked my socks off for them. And the fact that [the academic partner] is still on the reference group for that aspect of the work ... says a lot." (Interview with community partner)

Another community partner tries to explain why her work on the CUP is not being valued by her organisation:

"I think people [from within my organization] come across [this piece of work], they think 'wow, that's interesting', and they go back to their day business. And I guess, you know, when we are as big as we are now, ... a lot of what we're doing is risk management and compliance, and then my guess in many ways, a longitudinal research programme is kind of very nice to have, but it's going to fall really low on the list of risk management [priorities], so I think that's part of it." (Interview with community partner)

8.2. Self-confidence, power and community partners

Previous writers about CUPs are quite clear on the fact that CUPs typically bring partners together among whom there are significant power differentials. Universities are major players in the local economy and have a plethora of resources at their disposal. With VCS partners, nothing could be further from the truth. Also universities have been affected by funding cuts but these have been compensated for to some degree by increase in income from fees as a result the effect of cuts on universities are small compared to the reductions resources that characterizes the work of local authorities and the voluntary sector. Smaller voluntary organisations in particular are resource-poor almost by definition. This generates an uneven playing field between partners and from a financial angle, there is no doubt that community partners tend to be perceived as the weaker partner in most CUPs.

As we have noted in the section about getting started, the presence of certain drivers means that universities are more pro-active than the community when it comes to instigating CUP work and the community often finds itself at the receiving end. Therefore, the initiative often rests with the party who instigated the relationship and, for example, community partners find they are invited to be involved once the funding bid has already gone in and this further reinforces the uneven power in the CUP relationship.

Although this suggests that power rests with the university for various reasons, this is not necessarily the case, once one includes assets that are not financial. As one community partner notes:

“I learned that for a university to apply for certain types of research funding they must be working with a named community group. I then felt that ‘oh, this is why the university I am working with has made our group one of their named charities; it’s so they can get funding to fund their staff on research work based on our ideas.”
(Memory story of community partner)

For the most part, community partners in our study were quite conscious of the assets they/their organisations bring to the CUP. One community partner who plays a brokerage role based on extensive knowledge about a local community describes her role as follows: “I suppose when I approach the different organisations, I mean, I don’t have to explain who I am. People are always in a hurry, I suppose they think that if I say, ‘you know, there’s this thing [the] university is involved in would you like to do a project?’ they trust that it’s going to be something helpful. ...”

Another community partner describes the relationship of the organisation to a student placement who needed more support than envisaged:

“I think because that’s what our organisation does, it’s about support and enabling people and develop people’s potential that that’s part of what we do anyway, so it’s a challenge, you know, we’re dealing with families that are struggling, this was, to me, this was [similar to helping] a family that was struggling, trying to enable her to complete a degree, perhaps go on to a profession that whatever, I don’t know what she’s doing now, but that’s all part of challenge.” (Interview with community partner)

Another community partner whose organisation is part of a CUP that organizes and manages student placements has a clear view of her organisation’s importance:

“I don’t think there would have been any other organisation ... that would have been able to pull together so many third sector employers under the one kind of programme so quickly really... The other thing is you have to understand, there’s like two hundred odd employers, there’s hundreds of other employers out the other way, if we had the funding, we could have, we’ve been limited by finance, I mean, it could have been a lot bigger than it actually is ... So I don’t think there would have been any other organisation that would have been able to do that at all, at this moment in time.” (Interview with community partner)

Community partners might be perceived often as the less powerful and less well-resourced partner in CUPs, but once they become conscious of how much they contribute to a CUP to make it successful this perception changes, often increasing the self-confidence of the organisation and individuals involved. Community partners have assets in the form of contacts, reputation and expertise, among other things, that put them in

quite a strong position vis-à-vis potential academic partners who recognize these are central to any CUP.

8.3. How CUP working shapes individual identities and outlooks

As would be expected, individuals involved in CUPs all come with their own expectations based on previous working experiences. Partners often had specific expectations about what their role would be in the CUP and how they would help or be helped through their participation. They also had expectations of what academics/community partners respectively are like. Often, these expectations proved incorrect or incomplete.

In a few cases it is fair to say that partnership working has been transformative in the sense that some individual community partners who were very skeptical of working with academics have now become glowing advocates for this type of work. On the other side, there were a few academics who spoke about their work in the CUP as an eye-opener in terms of what community partners can contribute.

The following quote from a statutory community partner make it quite clear how influential the first experience in CUP working can be:

“My initial feelings around research ... changed doing this work because I’ve actually seen the impact and the benefit [on the service users], which some people ... don't see that, they don't see that actually it can benefit the people that are taking part in that research. ... Because I’ve only ever done research with [this academic], so if any research fellow or anybody who does research, I'm going to look at them as I've looked [at my academic partner].”
(Joint interview with CUP partners)

Another community partner echoes a similar feeling:

“I started off with quite a skeptical view about the usefulness of the university, and the fact that I live in a regeneration area where there is a university ... that's certainly not at the heart of the community and is seen as part of the problem by a number of activists in the area, in terms of their wanting to ally themselves with major development and so on, so again, that's part of my story, having some major conflict where I live with the university. So therefore, I suppose, my starting point would have been quite skeptical but, as a result of meeting [my academic partner] initially, starting to have this contact with [the university], then in the last couple of years in particular, getting to know other staff ... through discussions I've had, getting to know others [at the university], I think it's really enriched my understanding of all the potential benefits really, of the resources that a university has to offer, and perhaps made me more subtle, more tactical sometimes perhaps, in trying to make use of

those resources for communities.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

A third community partner reflects on how CUP working has transformed the organisational identity and self-confidence:

“The experience has given us the confidence to value what we’ve got, value how we can contribute and recognise that yes, academic individuals have a skills base, but we also have a skills base and actually, it’s a complementary process. Academics can’t engage with the, well with lots of groups of people unless they put a lot of pre-work in first and practical living communities before that kind of real action research. ... So we are a conduit ... but we are so much more because we have a vast knowledge of the criminal justice system and how it impacts on communities, on individuals, and on communities within those communities. So we have a diverse selling point, unique selling point if you like.” (Interview with community partner)

Academics’ outlooks have also been transformed through being part of a CUP. In the following quote, an academic remembers his original idea of his role as a school governor:

“I thought I was just going to help the school, that’s it. I thought the school needs a governor, and I’m in the profession, so I will be able to contribute. ... What I didn’t realise was, I didn’t realise how much I was going to benefit, I thought it was all going to be the school. And I was completely unaware of the many, many ways in which I would benefit. I guess if you’d asked me at the time, I would have said yes, I know, but I didn’t. And so it’s been a very, very fruitful relationship but I’m always very determined that the school will get more out of it than me, if possible.” (Interview with academic)

An academic who leads a research centre in collaboration with a charity was very impressed with the community input:

“One of the things that astounded me really, and still does when I look at the Advisory Board, is the level, the high level of professionalism that takes part in that and, you know, managers of organisations, top, really top police officers, and it’s people that can make decisions, and there are practical sides and I think that has to influence the research side...” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

The principal investigator of a large research study commented how her view of her community partner organisation had changed throughout the collaboration:

“My view of the organisation has really changed, I now appreciate that they’re involved in much more work, more expansive area of work than what I thought originally. I realised that they as well as being expansive, they operate on different kinds of levels. They have a very high level of credibility with children and families, which is crucial, but also they do with government departments and with other NGOs.” (Interview with academic partner)

Similar to community partners getting a better sense of their potential through working with someone from the university, academics, too, can feel validated by the feedback they get from community partners:

“I think they value the expertise that I can bring and the ... centre can bring and that’s nice you know I sort of feel I got to the stage now where ... people value the input that you can make and the angle that you might have something because I have only just appreciated that I think recently because [the charity] has got this reference group that I go to and they were very keen that I continue to go to that and you know they’ve given feedback that they really value my input into it.” (Interview with academic)

8.4. Marriage of convenience or love match? Respect and appreciation in CUPs

Generally a high degree of mutual respect and appreciation tended to characterize individual partners’ attitudes to each other. Even if one makes allowances for the fact that even when interviewed separately, partners might play down problems in CUPs, one cannot help but be struck by the at times passionate endorsements that participants gave their partners. For the most part, community partners were extremely impressed by and respectful of their academic counterparts and vice versa and often CUPs were conceptualized more as friendships than as professional relationships. Some of the CUPs in our sample as is shown below appear to be ‘love matches’, where shared values and passions have come to define the partnership; by contrast, however, some CUPs appear merely as ‘marriages of convenience’ in which both parties have reasoned with themselves and decided that it would be mutually useful to partner with the other. In between there are a smaller number of CUPs , where partners are clearly on friendly terms, motivated by mutual respect, but they still cast their relationship in professional rather than personal terms.

In the quotes below, two academics express deep appreciation of their community partner:

“I think it’s star signs... I think our minds work in quite a similar way. Cause I’m a Gemini and I kind of bounce off ideas like that and I sort of think that [you have] got the same thing of kind of, having that kind of mind that goes from idea to idea. It’s almost like, it’s a sort of, yeah, it’s a particular way of thinking. And it was interesting

on the project because in many ways I thought I had more in common with [you] in terms of how he thought than I had with [a colleague from the university].” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

“Her organisation is interesting, but she is quite phenomenal in terms of just her energy and her connectedness and her commitment and all these things and, I don’t know whether charisma is quite the right word, but you know she’s clearly at the centre of a group of people, of volunteers who share her passion and I think they would do anything for her ... And I think that’s an interesting aspect about community partners that you know, we’re just very lucky in having her as a community partner, or her organisation with her at the centre because she’s very welcoming.” (Interview with academic)

One academic explains the importance of the individual relationship:

“I do like to make a relationship with the individual. So again it’s about finding individuals who have the same values, because then whatever they’re doing, it’s going to be good working with them. ... I don’t really care if [my community partner] is in [this charity] or moves to Manchester, you know, I’d still want to work with her because we share a commitment and values base.” (Interview with community partner)

Her community partner mirrors this attitude:

“...there’s shared values and a shared objective really, that both [my academic partner] and I care about you know, trying to help the key people in children’s lives do the best they can, and we probably like each other on a personal sort of relationship, you know, she’s pretty quirky. That’s quite interesting.” (Interview with community partner)

On the other end of the spectrum are CUPs that are clearly ‘marriages of convenience’ but are still driven by a perceived positive mutual benefit. One university partner highlights mutual benefit as the key ingredient of a CUP: “The most successful ventures are the ones where there is an intersection where both parties benefit from something. They’re the best, most sustainable initiatives.” (Interview with university partner) Another university partner has arrived at a similar conclusion:

“Because there are some natural differences between civil society and academic institutions in terms of all sorts of things that you must deal also about the timescales of producing things, whether we can answer particular questions, and I think perhaps that was a struggle to get that to work effectively. Where I think that works best

now is on a kind of case-by-case where's there's a strong, clear mutual interest." (Interview with university partner)

The community partner in this relationship comments as follows on her organisation's relationship with the university:

"I was just thinking about what we were saying at the end, whether we [as community partners] are [merely] service users [of the university's research services] and talk of the power relationship, I mean I definitely think, I don't feel that we've ever been discouraged, so I think certainly anytime [our charity has] been proactive, we've reached out or we've asked to engage, they've always taken that on board. I think we've probably not reached out that many times, and I think equally they probably haven't either, they haven't probably recognised or haven't invested that much in us." (Interview with community partner)

It appears that although mutual benefit is naturally important as a rationale for having a partnership at all, when a CUP continues to be based primarily on mutual benefit rather than becoming a relationship between individuals, it can be harder to create an atmosphere of mutual trust where partners co-produce ideas and take them forward organically. Nevertheless the CUPs that operate in this way are still seen as valuable.

Mutual trust based on a recognition of each other's constraints coupled with a certainty that the other partner is doing what they can to make it work is another ingredient of good relationships at the heart of successful CUPs:

"But I don't know how much [my academic partner] has felt like a lone voice in her institution in the pioneering work that she has done. ... I suspect that she has put herself out on a lot of times, because of her passion and her knowledge and skill, she's made that happen." (Interview with community partner)

An academic who has a longstanding relationship with a community partner echoes this: "So, like I mentioned, I'm always, I'm constantly, if I get in touch with [my community partner] and her colleagues and say would you be interested in X or Y, that they usually are. And I'm appreciative of that because I know they're full stretched in other ways too." (Interview with academic partner)

Another academic describes her community partner in equally appreciative terms, but ends by pointing out the importance of reliability of the organisation overall:

"... she's a very brilliant woman! So she has the practice experience, but she's also very, very quick to turn practice ideas into important conceptual arguments as well which were really important to us, in terms of the science. So she's, she was just, as an individual, she was absolutely superb, just really first class! I

think she also, they also are very good at delivering. If they say something is going to be done, it's going to be done." (Interview with academic)

A community partner describes his counterpart at the university also by emphasizing her ability to deliver:

"But I think, the other thing is, you know, is that I know that if we've got an issue or if we need some support, that it's within [her] gift to give us that, she does. And you know, for lots of organisations that's not the case. And I think that's very, very important....Absolutely, I know if she can help us, she will do." (Interview with statutory community partner)

Key Messages:

Good CUPs are always underpinned by mutual interests and benefits, but where there is appreciation of one's partner on a more personal level, there is more trust.

Engaged academics often feel misunderstood and undervalued by their institutions. Some of them come from a professional background that is associated with the community and are very proud of it. They often feel more allegiance to the CUP than to their institution.

Mutual trust based on a recognition of each other's constraints coupled with a certainty that the other partner is doing what they can to make it work is at the heart of successful CUPs.

Community partners tend to think of themselves as part of an organisation with a mission and the CUP is one way of taking this mission forward.

In CUPs, although community partners are rightfully often seen as the weaker partner, financially, the community partners in our sample were often keenly aware of the many assets they bring in the form of contacts, reputation, expertise etc.

The first experience in CUP working is a powerful influence on future attitudes to CUPs. Successful CUP working creates "converts," who continue to explore opportunities to work in this way.

CUP working made community partners more aware of their strengths.

CUP working made academic partners more appreciative of community partners' contributions.

There is a need to capture the transformational effects of CUPs and use these examples to inspire others to get involved in CUP working.

9. The mission and values of CUPs

Those who are part of CUPs tend to be concerned with formulating an identity for the CUP itself which reflects the mission and values. There were numerous statements in the interviews that suggested that coming to terms with what one's CUP is means differentiating it from others out there in terms of mission and values. Generally speaking, those interviewed tended to be proud of their CUP and sometimes quite protective.

This includes putting a CUP into the broader strategic context of community engagement, setting a CUP apart from certain negative expressions of this community engagement agenda and framing a CUP as more authentic than others. Statements about differentiating a CUP often gave insight into salient issues for successful CUP working.

9.1. Defining the mission

Putting a CUP in a broader strategic context means finding a niche and scoping whether there are any competitors or allies out there. The following dialogue between the university coordinator of a community of practice (CoP) and one of the CoP members illustrates this:

“Academic partner: we are an example of something bigger that is happening in other places in different ways, and it would be interesting to think of it about what that is, ... there are these (pause) these things which bring together the people in the university and outside.

Community partner: Yeah, but you see the trouble is ... just from my perspective, you see cause I haven't founded it or anything, so, but from my perspective as an attendee, see my perception [of other similar projects], is that they are successful projects that have worked their way, either originated from within the university, or, and they forced their own identity very much tied up with the university, ... but not really subversive particularly. My feeling of things, there's still with [our CoP], ... for me there's an appeal, and it's something to do with activism or subversiveness.

....

Academic partner: So when I was just talking about [our CoP] being an example of something broader, that made you feel a bit uneasy in the sense that, that could imply a sort of toning down...

Community partner: Yeah, now whether I'm correct in that is quite another matter but there's something you see with making things bigger, connected, that does compromise." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

This illustrates the importance of finding a mission for the CUP. Once a mission has been identified it can be important to avoid mission drift, as the coordinator of a student placement scheme testifies:

"Because I think we would have, I mean inevitably I think we would have been pulled at some point into careers and employability and it would have been all about work placements. I mean, yes, we tick those boxes, because I think we do develop employability skills, but that's not what we're really about so that's additionality, not purpose. ... And I think [another academic colleague] and I have really developed a kind of understanding of the kind of radical pedagogy that we see as important as underpinning this, meaning to think about, you know, why is this different to say old work placements, and what is it that students get and community organisations get that might be slightly over and above that, slightly different." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

For CUPs, finding a mission that situates itself in the wider context is important in order to provide an ongoing focus to CUP activities. This is important, because it gives partners a certain clarity, a sense of purpose and direction – a sense of how the CUP is different and unique from other initiatives.

9.2. Connecting to the larger picture

Also, the realisation that a CUP is indeed part of a larger movement can be useful for those involved in partnerships to identify future opportunities, as well as improve community partners' understanding of their role and distinctiveness. One community partner points out how reframing existing work into general concepts enhances the sustainability of partnership working:

"We're lucky our university is very into CUP work and this is a living example of how that plays out. So it's not just a tick box, they can profile it and, you know, feel good about it, they can sort of sell it, because it's an example of how they work well with the community. Reframe, reframe, oh they love all the international stuff, so we've built links with other people in other countries who are doing resilience work and they seem to like that. So you know, we make sure all of that is said." (Interview with community partner)

An academic echoes the importance of being connected to the larger picture:

“Yeah, I would say you need to see what the kind of prevailing buttons are, that need pressing. It sounds a bit cynical but obviously if you can align whatever undertaking it is to something that the university seems to consider important, it may mean kind of reconceptualising without diluting messages, so for example, here’s an example, it’s not about the university necessarily but it’s about research work. ... it took me a good one or maybe two years of talking to clinical research colleagues to be able to understand that I needed to sell them this student as an intervention and once I’ve done that, they all started to say ‘oh I see!’” (Interview with academic)

A community partner also emphasized that being connected to the larger picture will enhance the voice of communities:

“You see one of the reasons we got [funding] is because [our university partner] was on a committee at national level, very high powered level nationally ... I mean, she was in a very good position, because of her connections through the university and the government, although we had good connections ourselves in the government, but all of those things make a difference. They link you to the bigger picture, a wider world, whether it’s the academy or whether it’s the government, it’s always strengthening the voice of local people to have those connections.” (Interview with community partner)

Good awareness of what the CUP’s unique selling point is within the wider public engagement landscape enables partners to frame their CUP in a way that will resonate with their stakeholders.

9.3. Putting CUPs into a historical context

Many academics are somewhat critical of the past elitism of research, as well as past attempts of universities at public engagement. The past, therefore, is used as a learning resource which guides how some CUPs developed their values and mission. One academic consciously frames the initiatives she generates as a reaction to misguided earlier attempts:

“Nobody was benefiting from it apart from the researcher, and I think that’s still something that happens, particularly with some PHD students and all sorts of people and that’s never been anything I wanted to be part of, and so what happened, we started, I started teaching the community audits stuff on the course and the participatory research and that’s when I wrote some stuff that got

published – um - this is 1998 or something like that about the way that we did it here, you know, the way that we work with the students and actually started off using the community audit I think I coined that – yeah - I think I did, - yeah - made it up.” (Interview with academic)

An academic who jointly runs a historical research centre with a local museum notes his satisfaction with the way this initiative has made research more accessible to the public:

“So for decades the photographs and the text, the ... people of the town were the subjects of these but didn’t get anything out of this at all. It was the researchers who took the photographs and wrote the texts who got the benefits, you know the writing and the publishing. So in one sense, there’s sort of a nice dynamic going on in that now the photographs belong to the people , it’s up to them, they can do all sorts of things with them, they belong to them, not to the original researchers.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

The head of a small charity that is part of a research project explains why she decided to get involved in the CUP:

“There is ... consultation fatigue [here] and nothing ever comes of it, whereas this [research] was more specific than just general consultation. This was collective real histories. This has a specific purpose, it wasn’t just, you know, ‘what do you think if we had this new bridge and what do you think’, so it was more defined.” (Interview with community partner)

For both academics and community partners it is thus significant to be aware that CUPs are the latest expression of past attempts of universities to interact with communities. Knowing this then allows individuals to situate themselves in this history, learning from the positive aspects and setting themselves apart from the negative ones.

9.4. The challenge of co-production

One of the ways in which CUPs set themselves apart from negative historical precedents is by emphasizing co-production. Our case studies often set themselves apart quite consciously from what they perceive as lack of co-production in other CUPs they know of or have previously been involved in. So, whilst the ideal of co-production is central to the CUPs we spoke to, it is also clear that this is an ideal that is not always achieved.

The community partners often emphasized how the academic they are working with is different from all others who do not value the community contribution properly and see the CUP more as a mode of transaction, rather than a mechanism of genuinely co-

producing something. The following quote illustrates one community partner's statement about what was special in the CUP in question:

“Some researchers see themselves as being part of the community which develops research questions and then find people or situations or environments to test them in. I don't like that really, because, I'm sure it's appropriate in some ways, but I prefer the approach where the research questions are developed jointly. And that can happen for example in the work that [the CUP is] doing at a very local level where the [community] are asked to design the research questions in the neighbourhood right through I suppose to a more macro level, where people like ourselves in local government are puzzling certain issues and looking for other people.” (Interview with community partner)

Interestingly, academics, too, emphasised the ability of their community partner to engage in co-productive ways of working. The quote below is from an academic who comments favourably on the community partner who works with her on the CUP under review here:

“That same list of recommendations we've gone along to other providers with, who have kind of said 'tell us what to do' and that's not been the case here. And I do feel here that it's been much more you kind of had ideas of what you wanted to do ... I think it was, you had particular things you wanted to get ... whereas other providers have very much kind of seen us as the knowledge people who are going in and telling them how to do things, and that's not really what we were looking for.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Although co-production was often seen as the hallmark of true partnership, it was also noted that this has its limits. For example, the academic quoted below points out that some community partners don't have sufficient capacity to fully participate in co-production:

“[My community partner] isn't going to be the only person who's saying I'd rather spend, you know, the time that I allocated to this, to discuss something a bit concrete that's already there, and I can just change it, rather than being there right at the start with a blank sheet of paper. And I don't know how typical that is of community partners, but certainly in some people who aren't suspicious of things being narrowed down too much by the ball being set rolling by the academic partners.” (Interview with academic partner)

An academic who has worked with a community organisation on a big research project reflects that there are various levels of involvement for community partners:

“I would say it depends on what they want to be involved in because they have to determine their own priorities and where their expertise lies and what aspect they want to be involved. Sometimes being involved in research NGOs see that as something that is good for their capacity building, you know, getting new skills, but sometimes it feels it’s too much work to take on when they have the challenges of being a voluntary sector organisation so the decision about what they would be involved in often would depend upon them but it also depends upon what the nature of the study is. All of our work is around very sensitive issues. If we’re doing research around HIV, AIDS, it’s better for us to train people working in an NGO around HIV, AIDS around research methods to do the research, rather than for them to access participants for us to do the research, because there’s issues of trust and confidentiality. And sometimes that works that way but that has to be “does the NGO want that” or do they prefer that, you know, we had this partnership that they do something else, so they can have a role in, usually they would have a role, when I say they would have a role in designing the methodology, I would say I’m thinking about the most recent projects, the most recent proposals we submitted, yes, but I would design the methodology as a draft, I would send it to them for consultation, we would look at the practical realities, and they would comment back and we would end up with something that they’ve been part of. When it comes to delivery, we will identify the specific role of what the NGO is, they may take on the role of operational manager, they may take on the role of conducting research interviews, they may take on the role of dissemination...” (Interview with academic partner)

Ultimately, however, power dynamics mean that the university is in the driving seat, as the same academic points out:

“So we’re doing the bid writing based on not partner expertise, but based on university’s expertise. So that’s how that process happened. They weren’t involved because you could only get the grant if you had the expertise to deliver the research methods. So to involve them at that stage is not something that we had time, we had time constraints, but also it’s very difficult for universities to think differently about partnerships, to get out of the straight jacket of the academic being more important. It’s a persona we all carry, so it’s difficult to break out of that.”

Key Messages:

Once partners become involved in CUP working, they are interested in seeing the CUP as a mechanism with a separate mission and set of values.

Defining a mission often involves community and university partners also identifying an approach to CUP working that is distinctive in the larger context created by the public engagement agenda and the history of CUP working.

Co-production was one of the criteria that CUP partners referred to in order to set their own CUP apart from those of competitors, but challenges remained in implementing a co-production in practice including inherent power dynamics and perceptions of knowledge, lack of capacity and time.

10. The Impacts of CUPs

The VCS and statutory sector has been asked to prove the impact of their work for a long time. For academics, this is still comparatively new territory as the impact agenda mentioned in chapter 3 has emerged. At the same time, there is a political consensus that partnership working, including CUPs, is a good thing and superior to working in isolation. However, despite the ubiquitous preoccupation with impact and the imperative for partnership working, the impact of CUPs is a relatively under-researched subject.¹⁴ Many studies have concerned themselves with the processes of partnership working, rather than with the impact or outcomes of partnership working.¹⁵ Where these have been addressed as part of research, this has tended to focus on the outcomes for students and universities, rather than that for communities.¹⁶

Community-led reports are not as visible or easily accessible as academic ones. Therefore, the fact that the discourse focuses on outcomes for students and universities rather than communities, might not be due to the lack of community-related voices, but to the fact that these community voices are hidden somewhere in the “grey literature” or literally collecting dust on some organisation’s shelf.

Where CUPs conduct research, impact may very much be framed according to the impact definition of the research excellence framework (REF), which really looks at the impact of research in terms of academic outcomes, improved dissemination of research etc., but does not capture the benefit for communities as much.

We asked our sample about impact and benefits obtained through their CUP and this revealed the following categories of impact:

1. On individual partners
2. On partner organisations
3. On service users (i.e. students/beneficiaries of VCS or statutory agencies)
4. On the wider community (i.e. local residents in an area where a CUP is active)

Interestingly, there was little evidence from the CUPs in our sample of negative impacts of CUP working although some of the criticisms about CUPs made by interviewees have been outlined in earlier chapters. Most of the references in interviews to impact are related to the first two categories above, with some evidence of the third. This would mirror the general lack of information noted in previous studies about the benefits of

¹⁴ Larkin, M., Richardson, E., and Tabreman, J. (2012), New partnerships in health and social care for an era of public spending cuts. *Health and Social Care in the Community* 20(2), pp. 199-207

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 200

¹⁶ Tryon, E. and Stoecker, R. (2008) The Unheard Voices: Community Organisations and Service-Learning. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 12(3), p. 47

CUP working for wider communities. However, it is noteworthy that interviewees usually responded to the question on impact on the wider community by pointing out that this is very difficult to ascertain. Therefore, the dearth of information on this might be related to the general difficulty of establishing whether any intervention has had an impact and the need for evaluation work which often has limited funds and focuses on issues where it is possible to report measurable impacts. As one academic who has been involved in CUP working for a long time explains: "We're evaluating some of [our work]. But the whole issue about tracing what, how you really change individual, service user's life, is a massive issue and we don't have the resources to actually trace all that properly."
(Interview with academic)

Additionally, just because a benefit or impact has occurred as a result of the work done by a CUP does not necessarily mean that another mechanism of doing the same work might not have had the same beneficial effect.

10.1. Impact on individual community and academic partners

The impacts on individual partners are typically in the areas of professional development and access to different networks. The benefit can be somewhat different for academics than for community partners. Community partners tended to emphasize personal and professional development more than academics. Academics, on the other hand, stress the value of connecting to real-life experiences and settings in which their research is useful.

10.1.1. Community partners

One community partner describes the array of benefits that working in a CUP had for her, many of which were unexpected:

"I got more than I expected. I thought when I set out I would just get a slightly better evidence base for what we were doing, you know, that would strengthen my ability to do the work that I do and I did get that. But also loads of questions and I got lots of other stuff. I got all these relationships, I got to move out of my job, I got you know to find out about academia and access all their networks."
(Interview with community partner)

Most community partners perceived of CUP working as a process of personal and professional development. Being part of a CUP opened up opportunities that allowed individuals to explore areas of work and experience they would have not had the chance to experience as part of their normal work. Some people commented on the additional "head space" CUP work afforded: "It's nice for me to get out of the office sometimes, and get that head space, if I'm honest with you." (Interview with statutory community partner). A community partner who heads an organisation involved in a CUP commented on the benefits for her staff's development:

“All those people went away and spoke to people about what they’d done in Geneva, been in Brussels, went to Dresden, did this, did that. It was, and not just from an academic and research point of view, a really good process for people’s development, confidence and just generally getting to know people.” (Interview with community partner)

A deputy head teacher at a school that has had a school governor from the university on its board for many years reflects on one aspect of her learning that wouldn’t have happened unless there had been a connection with the university:

“I was part of the interview process for the newly qualified teachers (NQTs), that was something I’ve not done before and that was an experience. I’ve interviewed staff, I’ve interviewed for staff in school, but doing that was different because when you interview for teachers, you expect them to have that different amount of knowledge, so that was something that I wouldn’t have done if I hadn’t been part of, or because of [our academic partner] that happened. ... Having taught for seventeen years and coming back to the lack of knowledge that you have before you actually do your NQT, and then, so it’s actually reminded me of where people start from, and I think it sort of tuned me back into that, the amount of learning that has to happen ...” (Interview with community partner)

A service user who is involved in a community of practice describes the benefit of participating:

“I can get bored quite easy so I wouldn’t be coming if I didn’t find it really good, I don’t tend to just go to any old thing ... I think the good aspect of the group for me, which I picked up almost straight away, was a really good combination of the formality of it, in other words the formality of bringing in a good speaker or a good guest, but then also the informality as well of the group and mixing things up and talking very freely about one’s feelings, about services, so you get that combination of a ... certain form or structure but also being very much open to debate and interaction.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Community partners in our sample had experienced personal and professional development as a result of their CUP work. Community partners particularly valued the ability of a CUP to provide otherwise rare space for reflection.

10.1.2. University partners

One major area of personal and professional development that academic partners point out is the ability of CUP working to expose them to a real-life perspective. This mattered

to them because it meant that their academic work could be informed by what people on the ground actually grapple with and need, thus giving it more relevance:

“So the fact that I sit down and talk to a head teacher, to local governors, to local authority people, to parents in the school, means that I have a perspective on education in a real context.” (Interview with school governor)

“It is rewarding in that you’re seeing what you’re doing can be relevant and useful, it’s not always but it seems more so.” (Interview with academic partner)

“I mean a lot of the rewards are from working with people, I think the interesting thing for me is working with service users and voluntary organisations in ways that you have to stay close to the ground really.” (Interview with academic partner) In this case, as in some others, this has had a positive spin-off for the academic in question: “I suppose one very positive thing about my involvement with the scheme and with my collaborators is that I have developed an amount of expertise which is recognised now and have therefore become involved in other things.”

“I’ve got some ideas and some creativity which I’m not really finding within the university, not obviously because there’s such a narrow focus in many ways on research or on teaching but there’s not the focus of this kind of new way of doing things.” (University partner in joint interview with CUP partners)

“And I wouldn’t be able to do that without a regular contact point with practitioners like [my community partner] and a few others round the city, that is regular, that isn’t me coming to consult on a specific project idea but it’s much more about conversations that you have in the corridor or, you know, that you tell me about one new policy shift that the Arts Council is making that sheds light on a huge thing that I’ve been thinking about, and brings it down to earth in a very useful way.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Sometimes these encounters with practice can be eye-opening experiences. For example, one academic reflects on how hearing another member of the CoP she facilitates talk about her experience influenced her thinking and the development of ideas informing her research:

“It did quite move me, her talking about it, and it’s been in my head a lot since, but it just seems to me an example of, you know, it was a meeting, she came once, she never came back. It was a small thing she said, and it was a seed, you know, and it was a seed that

is in my head now and if I had been a student going on to be a social worker in the mental health team who'd been at that meeting, I think it might have kind of really shifted something in terms of my understanding of how I was going to work with people in the future.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

However, compared to the community partners on this study, the academics did not refer to personal and professional development as often, but emphasized the joy of partnership working itself. What partnership working often added to academics' already quite fulfilling jobs was the sense to work with someone who is not a competitor, but whose values and goals are shared and who often brings enthusiasm and passion to the work. Many university partners described their experience of CUP working as fun and rewarding, as well as a source of companionship, rather than looking at it as a source of development, as the following quotes suggest:

“It is quite tiring I have to say. It's fun, and worthwhile to people in the world out there, as well as to the university, so that's the pay off.” (Interview with academic)

“It's brought richness in a lot of ways and it has been a lot of extra work, there are sometimes when I've not taken all my holiday, many many years that's not been the case but I enjoy it.” (Interview with academic)

“It's lovely to work with a group of people like that, who are there for a reason, no real axe to grind and look at things differently. I love that!” (Interview with academic)

“We're able to bounce off each other as well, it's you know, we probably be talking about something totally unrelated, but we will also be talking about [the subject of our CUP research] and we're both really enthusiastic about what we're doing and it's nice if you can share that enthusiasm with somebody who understands ... what you're talking about and that's great to be able to do that.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

“[My community partner] helps me understand my practice in a way that makes me feel quite sane and without him ... I'd look really odd, I mean to my colleagues. There's a few colleagues who get it, I met a really nice person the other week, but I could quickly go into a space where I just feel completely weird. Whereas with [my community partner] I think, oh, it's ok, I'm normal. I'm actually a normal person. I'm not an odd person, but I just happen to work in this very particular way that is quite intuitive....” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

“Well, why do you remain committed to what you do? It’s just that I think it makes a difference in a very small way, very micro but I also love doing it.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

“I’ve made a lot of friends and a lot of students got a few shots out of it. I’ve got no regrets about it.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

“In schooling especially if you’re seen to be academic you know, you wouldn’t want to bother with art, would you, you know, that would be a waste of time sort of thing, whereas actually I was quite good at art at school and I was very creative as well when growing doing you know, sort of sewing and everything else. In many ways [my CUP made me] rediscover these many things and how enjoyable they are and how they can be therapeutic and meditative, and this kind of thing.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

“I think it’s been a pleasure. I think she’s a very pleasant person, would tell you if she wasn’t happy. It’s been a happy kind of coincidence of kind of interests and maybe that style of maybe not burdening her too much works quite well.” (Interview with academic)

As was evident from the quotes above, academics often comment on how time-intensive CUP work can be. Nevertheless, a number of academics pointed out that partnering with a community partner can also save time. For example, an academic whose research institute is engaging with statutory fostering departments voices an opinion several other academics in the sample had: “So she [the community partner] was able to do things and she did it much quicker, and for me it would have involved a lot more work and trust building.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Clearly, both community partners and academics who are involved in CUP working benefit considerably from the experience, both on a personal and a professional level. While community partners emphasized the luxury of having a space to reflect about their work, academics often value the companionship of working with someone who shares their passion and values.

10.2. Impact on Partner Organisations

When staff engages in CUP working the organisation also stands to benefit, even if there is no official partnership arrangement at the institutional level. Community partner organisations and universities alike were affected by gaining access to new networks, which often generated new opportunities. Community partner organisations benefited by gaining access to research and evaluation skills, staff development, evidence that supported their work and was often used to obtain funding, and to the credibility and prestige that was associated with working with a university. Universities, on the other hand, benefited by improving their research quality and impact, supporting their

widening participation missions and expanding their student offer, as well as gaining access to staff and student development and credibility as a result of working with community partners.

10.2.1. Impacts on Community partners

One form of impact on VCS organisations was often in terms of improved access to resources. This did not always come through the university partner, but could happen, because of access to wider networks, which in turn generated access to new opportunities.

One community partner remembers how she got involved in designing a training programme as a spin-off from her main CUP:

“[This academic and I] ... developed a thing called the Apprentice Programme. ... we knew that these two women were trying to develop this work-based learning framework and we knew her from, [my main university partner] knew her actually, it was [my main university partner] who introduced me to [her].” (Interview with community partner)

A primary school that has a governor from the university has benefited by getting access to new networks, training delivered by other university staff, as well as new teachers:

“So I think that’s unlocked the fact that we’re part of this cluster of twelve schools. I think if we didn’t have [our academic partner] as a governor, then it wouldn’t have happened in this way. And I think other tutors have come and done activities in our school because of him, so he has guided them to our school and then it’s evolved into this bigger thing. So that has definitely happened while I’ve been here, ... we’ve had teachers who just visited, and had the experience that they’ve had with [this governor] and then they’ve said once they’ve reached, once they’ve graduated, they wanted particularly to work in [our school].” (Interview with community partner)

This community partner also commented on the ability of an academic partner to lift staff morale after a problematic OFSTED inspection by putting the work of the school in a wider context:

“And someone who wasn’t in the leadership team immediately within the school day to day, so having [my university partner] come in and talk to the school staff and say ‘I know that you’re doing a fantastic job and I know that these children are getting the best’, for

[our academic partner] to come in and say that as a governor, did make a massive difference.”

Something similar was echoed by another statutory community partner, who refers to the benefit of having evidence of the quality of work that staff are doing:

“Well like I say, we’ve got the transcripts, [our academic partner] allowed us to see the transcripts [from interviews with service users] which is evidence that the work we’ve done here has been beneficial ... Going to the conference nationally, the first conference I came away from, I came back to our teams I said “look, we’re pretty good up here, we’re actually quite forward thinking”, and that has a big impact on your team, because your team then feels uplifted and they go out and produce their work better.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Working in partnership with academics also brought prestige, which in turn can pave access to funding and resources. A charity was able to roll out a training programme for students more easily, because its initial partnership with a university went well:

“I guess the partnership with [my university partner] was an initial fantastic and step up into the project ... it was one that really ran well, and I think on the back of that the working partnership grew. I can't remember when we did presentations together, we did talk about it, you know. I then developed other partnerships with other universities, with other people and it grew and it grew. And what's good for us about it is that it means it could have been a nice little project that finished in 2004 that people would have forgotten about. Instead of which it's a project now which has spread way across the UK into Ireland and you know, I guess in the first initial time, initial project I think it was 70 people with [this health condition] in their own homes, now I can say I've reached 700 people with [this particular condition] in their own homes. So I've trained over a thousand volunteers/students. And that's huge, that's had a much bigger impact.” (Interview with community partner)

For this particular charity, the roll-out of the programme also generated some revenue, as subsequent university partners had to pay for training that had been developed and was being delivered by the charity.

The business manager of an organisation who has hosted a student placement told us that she is constantly referring to the research and uses quotes from an evaluation report to lend credibility to her organisation's work. Most importantly, the research that the student carried out on behalf of the organisation has enabled it to secure long-term

funding:

“We’ve gained lottery funding through our last research project, that means that the organisation is stable for five years, which we’ve never had happened before, which means we can plan ahead, because normally our funding is usually for one year or two or three years. So we’ve had funding up to three years before, but we’ve never had funding for up to five years. So that has really helped.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

A CUP that also specializes in student placements into the VCS has been able to generate data about the impact of the placements on organisations:

“I think we’re now at the point where you can say [to organisations], ‘look if you put in £2,000 you get at least £10,000 worth of benefit back.’ That’s quite powerful. But I think, to say that to an organisation when it’s in a state of financial strain is actually quite difficult.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

In one case, a research study funded a number of smaller community-based organisations to collaborate. One of the community partners explains how this funding benefited the organisations involved by enabling them to take things forward that had been put on the backburner due to the tough financial environment:

“Project funding is much easier to come by than funding for running costs. If you got a nice looking project that’s new and innovative and small, you can usually get the money for it but nobody wants to pay for your heating, your lighting, your admin and all that. So I guess if people had prioritised some of these things, they could have put some funding bids and got them, but nearly all these projects are struggling just to keep going, like [one organisation] has been going on the edge of going down for the last five years or something. I mean [one staff member] is almost certainly paid for three days and working five, [another] is down to part time but is working full time, but that’s how they cope in projects like that isn’t it? Yes, we’re struggling with funding all the time. So you can’t say anything is as simple as would have happened already.” (Interview with community partner)

In one particularly striking case, a PhD placement was the only permanent feature in a rapidly evolving organisational environment. This meant that in a fairly chaotic situation for the organisation there was a certain degree of continuity at least, as well as someone observing the changes. The PhD student almost maintained something like an institutional memory and bore witness to what the organisation was going through. Because the studentship was funded by the university, it was not affected by the

turmoil, thereby providing much-needed capacity:

“[in] a three year case studentship the guy had something like three or four different supervisors in the agency because they kept changing ... a lot of the funding for the organisation went because of the way the government did all sorts of things went you know a complete set of turmoil and the only thing that was static in some ways was us here and [the] case studentship” (Interview with academic partner)

One of the benefits that was mentioned was that of having evidence to back up policy statements. The head of a charity that was involved in a CUP that involved a multi-year European study in the criminal justice system points out:

“What it gave us is the research and statistical evidence that said what we knew anecdotally. Now we’ve got the evidence to really be strong in the messaging, and that’s where we are now. We’re at the messaging stage, about how we’re going to get this information out, how we’re going to use the fact that this document exists, and it’s supported by some quite high profile people across Europe. ...So, you know, it’s massive in relation to the messaging.” (Interview with community partner)

One community partner whose organisation is involved in a specialised research centre has acquired the status of honorary research fellow, which makes a big difference for her work on behalf of the organisation:

“Well for me in the practical sense, it means that I can access university resources, so I’ve got a library card, I can get software , things that you know, I would never be able to access legally here. So for one example is that I was able to use the university’s SPSS license which I’d never had before, because that’s several thousand pounds, our charity certainly can’t afford things like that.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Research capacity and the ability to evidence their own impact was a big gain for charities involved in CUP work. Many community partners interviewed for the study commented on how useful it was that the CUP work enabled them to take a more reflective stance to their service than ever before:

“For this type of work, you know, most funding pots we would look at, they might allocate small amount for evaluation, but very little. And when you think about the administrative load of doing any research, most funders don’t fund admin. So you know, we’ve got a real challenge there in terms of actually building in the time to reflect, and food and drink, you know, and travel expenses, things

like that just struggle to be funded through a lot of projects now and disappear. And actually this CUP gives us a chance to bring people together and to reflect and that's very positive." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One case in particular stands out, where involvement in the CUP has caused one charity to really expand its approach to the services it delivers. A charity that had previously addressed children's concerns by focusing on the adults in their lives now decided that children should get services in their own right. The chief executive explains:

"But for me the biggest learning... is that [our charity] has always provided its variety of services to the adults in the family. So we focused our intervention on adult family members, predominantly female carers of children, grandparents of children, even fathers of children. ... What we didn't see in relationship to service provision was the children as a group of people in their own right that, and even with the best will in the world, healthy adults don't always recognise the need of their own children...." (Interview with community partner)

Even where CUPs are time-limited, rather than ongoing relationships, they can leave useful legacies for community partners. The founder of a community history centre that worked with a university partner in research gives an example of this:

"For us it was quite interesting because we were trained to do all of the histories so we knew that we would have a legacy of one: the equipment but two: the skills and three: that we could actually start getting stories of the people that used to be living [here] when it was a thriving place." (Interview with community partner)

However, one community partner whose charity is involved in a long-term international research study highlights the fact that in order to truly benefit from a research collaboration, the organisation must allocate capacity towards using the findings strategically, rather than being content with having a part in a prestigious project:

"But I think, I totally believe, and I believe that lots of people in [our organisation] believe that, if we could divert ourselves away a little bit from the project implementation and from fundraising, and to look at what's emerging from this longitudinal study, that the findings are fascinating and that the findings should shape every proposal that we write, and the findings should shape every policy discussion that we have. So yeah, we sort of come back to that. I think also it's been a huge feather in our cap, I mean I think if you

ever say to anybody [our organisation] is part of a fifteen year longitudinal research programme with [our university partner] funded by DIFIT, people always go “Wow, that’s amazing!” Yeah, I know that’s an incredibly shallow thing to admit but it is pretty impressive and people always do think that they never hear of an NGO that had that.” (Interview with a community partner)

10.2.2. Impacts on Universities

Academic partners often commented on how their universities stand to benefit from the work their CUPs are doing. This was usually framed in terms of the student experience, widening participation and the REF. In a number of cases universities were able to expand their range of teaching modules as a result of CUP working, as well as making their teaching more practice-relevant.

An academic based at a smaller locally-focused university points out that the university has acquired an improved international standing as a result of partnering with the local authority on a historical studies centre:

“But 2012 was the 75th anniversary of Mass Observation, so Sussex held an anniversary conference and I went to that, and there were people presenting papers on [our specific topic] from Canada, Australia and I think it was either Poland or Lithuania. So that’s the reach of interest. ... And we’ve also had scholars visiting the centre from Australia and Canada as well, so they come to the university, come to the museum to see us and we try to help them as best we can.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

In a number of cases, the CUPs in our sample had been used as REF case studies, thus contributing to their universities’ reputation and funding situation.

One academic whose research team worked in partnership with a local community centre, because CUP working was one of the requirements of the funding, ended up acknowledging the benefit of CUP working for the quality of research itself: “But even if that hadn’t been [a requirement], then it would have been, yes it would have been much harder to do it, probably it would have been less successful in terms of the quality of the outputs as well.” (Interview with academic)

The university partner in a research centre that is a CUP speaks about the benefits for the university:

“All of that increases the quality of what we’re doing because it ... enables the academics to ask the questions to make sure that what they’re doing is relevant. It gives them the sense of checking .., you know, does this make sense, is this going to work and it helps them incorporate and design the views of practitioners ..., and then it

gives avenues of people to work with for the dissemination of the research findings and for the implementation.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

The university partner in another CUP that involved a research study also described the co-production with community partners as something that boosted the quality of the research:

“I attended one meeting ... and it was two pieces of research were being presented ... and it was quite an interesting thing to watch because there was research being presented, but also in a form which involved civil society organisations but there was also the space for discussion amongst that group which had the effect of improving the quality of that research.” (Interview with university partner)

Interestingly, universities also boosted their credibility in other ways as a result of CUP work. One academic gives the following example: “being able to ... show well established links with [our community partner] has been very helpful in opening doors, and also I suppose demonstrating our credibility as an organisation here.” (Interview with academic)

Another academic echoes this. Whereas a very typical way of looking at benefit flows is to stress the benefit for community partners from being associated with the credibility of the university, this person saw the benefit going the other way: “I think definitely we [the university] are the beneficiaries of credibility and trust in the city not the other way round, absolutely.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Many university partners in our sample spoke about the university’s benefit in terms of widening participation and improving teaching and the student offer in general. This sometimes took the shape of acquisition of new expertise from the community and/or generated by CUPs. An academic partner comments on how a practice-based course that is run by a CUP, which is based at the university has become a magnet for prospective students:

“I feel, because of the history and the fact that there’s now like twenty odd groups of undergraduates that worked with [the CUP] on a course that tends to be very intense, extraordinary experience for students whilst they’re here, that and also some of the research that we’ve produced here has created a thing that [this university] is the place to come and do applied theatre now. I know there’s great places all over the country that you can do applied theatre in as well, so I’m not saying we’re better than those, but it does create a sort of aura or a brand if you like that attracts people to us. But more importantly even that, I think because of that history there is actually a quality in the training that they’re getting, especially in

those third year courses. ... so I think that is a bit of our USP and I think ... it helps our recruitment of undergraduate students certainly and that's much more of an issue now with the new fees structure.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

A number of CUPs in the study were successful in obtaining research council funding, which in itself is a benefit for universities, but the benefit went further when the CUP did not only generate research, but also manages to produce new content that can be used in the university's teaching operations.

In one case, an academic learned about a method for community engagement from her community partner, which was subsequently incorporated into the courses offered at the university. Another academic, who coordinates a placement scheme sees a two-fold benefit for the university:

“Oh, [the benefit] is massive! ... We end up pretty much sending all the reports to external examiners and most of them get distinctions at this level because [the students] ... sort of become committed to the organisation, they want to do it as well as they possibly can; so I think that's a benefit to the university. But also, obviously you know, just as I hope organisations benefit from the networks that [the CUP] is trying to build, the university also benefits from those networks too, so obviously when meeting new organisations, the time developing collaborative relationships with the organisations, co-learning.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Having expanded networks as a result of CUP work can also have positive spin-offs for the university: “I think the university has now got a very strong relationship with some of the other organisations [our community partner] put us in touch with, and those relationships are also having other kinds of spinoffs.” (Interview with academic partner). As a result of the connection the CUP had generated, the university was asked to do a commissioned evaluation for another organisation.

Universities also stand to benefit through increased publicity, which in turn can be used to show research impact in connection with the REF. One university partner who coordinates a research institute that functions as a CUP with a statutory partner reports:

“We've been having an increased audience at these events, so we've been advertising our events through [our community partner's] e-bulletin, so our mailing list has grown through them because we've been advertising it to 2500 people. So then we've had to get to the point where now at our events, two thirds of the audience are from outside of the university. It could be other universities, but there would be a lot of practitioners. ... so we've been able to build on the fact that already 1500 people are interested in what's going on in terms of [our subject].” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One university partner describes the strategic approach his university uses to utilize staff volunteering as professional development:

“What we’re keen to do as a university is identify a small number of things where we know there is a real added value of people when they come back into the university. So, with school governors we’ve got 25-year old members of staff making decisions about capital programmes in schools and whether to put a six-storey building up or a four-storey building, whether to become academies and the legal issues all the sorts of skills you’d never get at a university of this size and they’re getting that through a piece of voluntary work.” (Interview with university partner)

CUP can enable universities to do things they normally find hard to do. A university partner describes how partnering with a community organisation can unlock resources for things that are not seen as essential to the university’s mission:

“So, again, it’s helped us position ourselves as a socially responsible employer of choice for local people. ..Again, the reason why it’s had a lot of impact is that we’ve not done it ourselves. We’ve done it in partnership. We could have afforded it ourselves, but it would have taken money away from our primary charitable purpose of research and teaching, so to put buildings up that don’t have students in them or researchers, it’s difficult to justify ... so the fact that we could partner with housing trusts to do that, the fact that we could draw down public money as well through [our partners] has meant that we’ve been able to create this impact.” (Interview with university partner)

Key Messages:

Individual partners benefit professionally and personally from CUP working by getting access to their respective skills sets.

Community partner organisations have benefitted from CUP work as follows:

- ***Access to wider networks created new opportunities***
- ***Evidence of service efficacy and staff quality***
- ***Prestige and credibility associated with CUP research can help with accessing funding***
- ***CUPs offer access to funding in a difficult economic climate***

Universities benefit from CUP working in the following areas:

- ***Widening participation***
- ***Enhancing the student experience***

- ***Improving relevance of teaching for practical contexts***
- ***Positive impact on research quality***
- ***Enhanced credibility of the university with its local community***
- ***Access to funding from non-traditional funding sources***

11. Benefits for service users and the wider community

As mentioned earlier, in light of the general difficulty to evidence impact, our data yields less information on the impact of CUPs on those that might not have been directly involved in the partnership itself: service users and the wider community, including students.

The following gives an overview of the information contained in the data which showed that for service users there were direct and indirect benefits of organisations getting involved in a CUP. Where organisations work with academics, this usually means that their beneficiaries will come into contact with these academics in some shape or form. Many community partners commented on the huge effect this had on vulnerable individuals who often had no idea that universities could be for them. Sometimes, interaction with the work of the CUP gave service users an opportunity to reflect on their own learning from the service they are receiving, but also building their self-confidence by actively contributing to knowledge creation and thus making the transition from beneficiaries to contributors.

For students, being placed in a community partner organisation is not only beneficial to their academic and professional prospects in a scenario where the community partner effectively becomes part of their educational experience. Students can also have transformative experiences working in community-based organisations that actually set them on a totally new career trajectory.

As for the wider community, these benefits are much harder to evidence, of course. Generally speaking, there is an assumption that involvement in CUPs, with all the attendant impacts on community-based organisations and their staff, will have some sort of ripple effect in the communities these organisations serve, through adding sustainability to existing projects, delivering improved services as a result of evidence-based practice or by linking the community in with the wider world. More specifically, in our sample, there were a few CUPs whose decided aim was to give voice and ownership to communities that were stereotyped in the media to assume ownership of their own stories.

11.1. Service users

It is highly likely that, given the importance of VCS organisations' mission in their decision-making, partners from such organisations would enter CUPs with the expectation of the work ultimately benefiting service users. One community partner whose partnership with academic researchers was still at the very early stages described her expectation of the impact on service users as follows:

“...it's about trying to sort of step people into the wider world, so people can become a bit [overly dependent on]... their support group or something, and that's risky at the moment because

support structures are disappearing, so hopefully this is an additional chance to reflect and build up more skills. But in terms of reflection and reflection on their learning ... it's a bit more time for people to think about the effects that it's hard for them, and think back, whether it's positive or negative, they learn a few of the skills of articulating something they've done; sometimes it's the first time they've done that." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Sometimes, the impact on service users of being in contact with CUP work is framed as the benefit of broadening their horizon, building self-confidence and aspirations with regard to education itself and their potential opportunities to enter further or higher education. As one community partners states:

"I know many people who've worked with [my academic partner] through us and through the schools, who've gone on to further education for a start. I know people who've gone on to jobs, but more important even that, the link with the academic world I think has just opened up many opportunities because lots of people that I worked with within the community have been involved in research projects." (Interview with community partner)

The director of a charity that has university partners on its board describes the impact on its service users of one of the university partners visiting the charity and observing daily operations:

"When [he] came in for the first board meeting and he met some young people from our school project, they were astonished that he was from the university. And what was the university doing here? That just shows you, I think there is a gap in aspirations between a lot of young people, especially in deprived areas, to actually go into university." (Interview with community partner)

The academic partner in a CUP that works with the local authority in researching a particular client group recalls an example of how visiting the university has the potential to change perceptions of service users:

"You know, I remember one of the young men saying to me actually, when I was asking about the whole, you know, how did you feel about being part of the research, at that last interview he was saying: 'It's great, I've come here, I've really thought about how I must come across other people the way that I dress, and I've changed the way that I dress.' And that's quite a minor thing, but for him, it made such a difference to how he saw himself, his self-confidence and how he has that understanding of how people may perceive him. You know his confidence was greatly increased.

This is a small example, you know, just by coming to a new environment, a new place” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

In this CUP there has also been an example of a service user going back into education: One of the young men has come on to do an Open University degree, very able young man, having a baby stopped him from following that path, and being a part of this [CUP] gave him the links into doing an Open University degree. He’s currently doing that, and I think, connections with a section that supports people into higher education wouldn’t have even been able to achieve that, whereas this process has.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One statutory community partner stresses the fact that the benefit of CUP working for service users does not exhaust itself in the provision of resources, but expands beneficiaries’ horizon in terms of meeting people they would not normally meet and having access to alternative viewpoints:

“A lot of people think it’s just about providing financial resources. Yes, that’s always useful and there is very few about, but it’s not just about that. It’s often an opportunity to open their minds and their hearts and their souls. An example would be when we ... we call it detached ... looking for a group of young people, bumped into three girls, quite a dark-ish stormy night, with [my academic partner], and established that one of them wanted to go to university. She was 14/15 years old and thought that university is never for her, because she’s from an impoverished background. So, I can say, ‘Do you know something, I have a friend who works at university, she’ll tell you you can do it and we’ll support you and other young people.’ Broadening their horizon that [my academic partner] was there. It’s about broadening their horizons, a different way of thinking, erhm, also often opportunities for young people to explore their emotional selves, in a safe way, yeah?” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Community partners often comment on how their service users have benefitted by participating in CUP work. For one voluntary organisation participating in a research project had unexpected benefits for its young service users that went beyond knowledge and included increased self-confidence:

“I mean we wouldn’t be where we are if without the research taking place but actually a lot of the value from my perspective has been the growth and the self-confidence of the young people who’d been involved in the dissemination. Some of whom weren’t even involved in the research, who’ve come to the table at a later stage, but have come to conferences with us and whose, one of their mums phoned me up last week and told me what a massive difference just attending a couple of conferences has made to this young person and how they deal with the issues that they’re facing,

and that, you couldn't have planned that at the beginning, but it's having that kind of awareness of how it might influence" (Interview with community partners)

But there is also a sense that service users value the opportunity to contribute to knowledge production and moving things forward in a certain field:

"I think that, when you have, foster carers are working very hard to do something that is not a job, is it? They do fostering because you know they want to help children, all of these kind of things. And I think that for them to be able to know we're working with [our university partner] and for them to actually be able to directly feel involved with things that are trying to develop and move fostering on, actually that they really enjoy that. They enjoy not just doing it in their home, but feeling that this is kind of a bigger picture and I think that that's kind of helpful for them is to you know, [my academic partner] came along to coffee morning and met people and that won't be the first time that the foster carers have met them. So I think that's really, I just think it's a helpful relationship and I think they actually gained from it, just feeling more partner of stuff, you know." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Also, there can be a sense of service users moving from beneficiaries to contributors, which is quite powerful for their self-confidence. The director of a voluntary organisation that partnered with universities to deliver user-led training to medical students describes this effect on the service users who become trainers:

"Our trainers train the students and I think they get a great buzz out of that. Don't forget these are people who are patients and in the relationship between the patient and doctor there's quite a lot of hierarchy. And so what you're saying to them is actually 'no, no, no, no, you're the trainers, you have the expertise in [your condition].' And that's why people with 25 years' medical experience are terrified. Suddenly they're getting feedback from these guys that they have never had before. So I think trainers feel very empowered; they get self-confidence, self-value all of those things." (Interview with community partner)

11.2. Students

Students as service users of the university stand to benefit from being part of CUP work. In our sample, there were a number of schemes, which facilitated student placements, as well as some CUPs that informed teaching in universities. Student placements are one of the most recognised forms of CUP, because they so clearly

serve the interests of the university, whilst also offering a service, at least in theory, to the community. However, universities often pitch these schemes to the community by emphasizing the benefit to the host organisation/community without acknowledging the fact that host organisations often become collaborators in students' educational journey.

The following quote is typical for university partners, for whom student placements are a straightforward way of achieving mutually beneficial outcomes: "Great to marry those two things together: our students are getting good experience which is supervised and the community is getting something it needs. And that's an example of, I think, high value added volunteering." (Interview with university partner)

However, reality is not always this straightforward and community partners in our sample did comment on the fact that students need to be supported to varying degrees by the placement organisation and are not always the asset they are made out to be. One interviewee commented on the fact that her organisation would not be able to function without the 15-20 "student interns" they host. At the same time, however, she referred to the skills she and her colleagues needed of "grabbing an essence from a student that enables them to finish the project," due to lack of preparation of many students and the absence of co-planning. (Future of CUPP interviews)

Looking at our sample, it turns out that a sizeable share of the benefit actually goes to improving students' education. One could argue that host organisations in fact supply a part of the student's educational experience, although this is not usually acknowledged by the university, either verbally or in terms of resourcing these relationships, unless student placements are part of a programme that leads to a recognised professional qualification. On these, placement providers are paid for their services.

The most obvious and often cited benefit for students is that of having an opportunity to get real-life experience and employability skills. One university partner reflects on experience from the CUP experience having served as a model for other practice-based learning at the university:

"It's reshaped ... the way ... we think about our entire third year of our module. ...A good third of the third year now is getting students to be in professional environments so [our CUP] runs that course and if they're doing that course, they're expected to work like a professional, so there is no tolerance of being late, there's no tolerance of not keeping up with what you're expected to do, if you want to go into prison to run a project, then you need to be working very, very professionally, so that's one course. But we have three other professional practice courses which, because you have to be like that for [our CUP], then that sets a kind of standard for how you offer your work, it's really is readiness to be put to work professionally, go out in the world of professionals." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Another academic who collaborates with a voluntary organisation in providing placements for students points out that students who have gone through this placement are learning things that will improve their performance in subsequent aspects of the course: “When they go on to that first clinical placement in the second year of the course, their supervisor, their clinical educators often remark on how at ease our students are with patients.” (Interview with academic partner)

For students, CUP working can be an eye-opening experience that can have a lasting impact, sometimes even re-orienting their future career choices. An academic who used to be involved in a strategic placement scheme with VCS organisations recalls the following: “Encountering situations and people and social issues that they had never experienced and that had profound changes, had a profound impact on a lot of them and took them into other areas of work that they would never have considered. What they said was they would never have considered going into these areas of work.” (Interview with academic partner)

At a different level, it can be beneficial to have to perform to real-life expectations, rather than to exam criteria. One of our memory story authors explains why:

“Students tend to be looking for marks and want to know what to do to get the highest grade, the active engagement and learning, making mistakes and trying things can often be cast aside with the sole purpose of doing it right. Having the goal of presenting their work for selection at an exhibition by an external body as opposed to presenting for a mark produced a definite different approach and students did try new ideas and experiment with a wider range of materials and processes. They were more considerate of sustainable design and how and where they sourced materials from. Because these factors were key to selection and key to the understanding of the brief they really researched the project, other designers and questioned actively their own role as designers and makers and how they could affect material usage. The project helped them step up to the mark and gave them a far greater professionalism which fed through to their final collections. The approach became a learned habit for most of the group.” (Memory story of academic partner)

One CUP actually started up in reaction to a negative student experience with trying to apply book-based learning in the community. One of the co-founders of this CUP within the university recalls the shock this graduate was in for when she found herself in a professional environment:

“[My colleague and] I had been teaching mental health on the social work programme and a student who we both had taught, I think, emailed [my colleague], and she was a social work student who’d

recently, or fairly recently got a job in a community mental health team and she said “I’m starting to wish that I’d never read a book”! and, well it’s quite a powerful statement and I think [my colleague] got back in touch with her and said, you know, “what’s this about?” ... I think what she’d experienced was an opportunity to read a lot of very interesting and quite critical ideas about mental health and ideas about how you can support people which I think were maybe a bit different from the mainstream kind of services, and ideas about what the role of a social worker could be potentially, and then she got into practice and she found that what she was saying was “I can’t use any of it, I just can’t use it, you know, I’ve got all these targets...” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

At universities where CUPs are in place, even where they don’t immediately involve students, they can have multiple spin-off effects for students. This could be in the shape of PhD opportunities, access to professors and lecturers that are more in touch with practice, as well as access to study resources. For example, one CUP between a university and a museum has led to enhanced accessibility for students of an important historical photographs collection.

A university partner who has served as a school governor benefited by the day-to-day practice they get through their involvement with the school, which in turn benefits their students and the students of other colleagues:

“So the dialogues that I’ve had with parents there I wouldn’t really get any other way, and so it gives me a handle on these voices, voices of parents, so I can talk to my colleagues about things, discussions that I’ve had with my parents and certainly I can relate that to students. Because of lot of my students are very, very anxious about dealing with parents I take my students there as a science tutor but in fact another tutor takes his students there as part of their learning about special educational needs, and now the English tutor takes students there to learn about the teaching of phonics, so actually this department sees that school and a number of others as centres of excellence, I mean we don’t use that term, but we know that if we take students there, the students are going to see what we call best practice, they’re going to see as good teaching and learning as we can find anywhere. And it’s an inner city context, and we are preparing our students to teach in inner city contexts.” (Interview with academic)

11.3. The wider community

From the above it is clear that various partners and individuals are benefitting from CUPs who are not necessarily themselves directly involved in the partnership. In light of

the fact that the wider impact of CUPs is still a fairly under-researched topic, this project explored if there is any evidence of the wider community benefitting from these partnerships.

One community partner reflects on the need of being proactive in order to secure benefits to the community-at-large:

“By actually leaping forward and being terribly helpful ... at least hopefully you can make sure that something comes out of it that’s useful for local people ... for example, because people always want older people lined up to interview, you know. So you get letters from people saying, you know, “I’m doing such and such a project, can you find ten old people to talk to”. So what we say, how about, you know, if you fund a trip or something, you can come on the bus and you can interview these people in the café and stuff and so then people get a trip which is really hard to fundraise for trips. Most people, they don’t have cars and they don’t have any money, so actually getting out is really, they love that. So the researchers get what they want, and the people get what they want.” (Interview with community partner)

An academic who is coordinating a research project that involves a number of community partners is putting the potential benefit for the wider community into perspective and suggested impacts can be quite limited:

“Of course there’s always, we hope, potential. That’s why we do it, potential for community university partnerships or any kind of research that community organisations engage in to promote change, develop new skills, so hopefully there’ll be some development of ideas, thinking skills, and often they can lead to another bigger project, or people can use what they’ve done in another bid for funding. So yes, of course we hope that the community groups may get some things from working with the university, but I’m not under any illusion that just doing a little project with [our] university is going to make a difference for most of these groups, because so much else going on in the world. I mean, I think it could be the projects that can make more of a difference are the ones where it’s more of a focused relationship with one or two community partners.” (Interview with academic partner)

For some organisations involvement in a CUP has been a beneficial move that has enabled the organisation to continue delivering much-needed services to the community, whilst also freeing up some time for future planning. When being asked about the impact of the CUP, this community partner said:

“Well I think the fact that the organisation is still running, because if we didn’t have the lottery funding, I’m not sure where the funding would have come from this year. I mean that’s my job to seek funding, I would have found it somewhere but it was, but given the organisation’s significant stability it means that I can plan ahead for things that will benefit different courses and things like that. So the focus this year, well, over the next five years, it’s wellbeing, but over this year was on courses enabling people to do that, setting up a walking group. Because we know that the funding is there so it’s freeing my time up then to actually develop the project, to do things which might help so we had our first half walk last week end for instance and the sixty people there adults and children and they loved it and they can’t wait for the next one. But if we didn’t have the funding my head would be in the applying for all sorts of different [funding].” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One voluntary organisation with a historical relationship to a local university has survived as a result of temporary emergency funding from the university. This has enabled the organisation to establish a sustainable funding base and provide essential services in a very deprived part of the community:

“[The organisation] was just on its knees. So, I took over and thought, I can’t let something this old go down the drain ... It was, like, the weight of this historical organisation. And also, aligned to that, was the passion for these kids who were there in the day instead of being in school. I’d been there a couple of years by then and had got to know them and I thought I am going to do a bid for the Reaching Communities. ... And then, from there, we are now in our second round of funding for Reaching Communities and have got all this funding. We’re working closely with the ... College, we’re doing supported housing ... you know, we were going from strength to strength. We were getting referrals from schools for school placements in the day and that’s what led us to build and own this multi-million pound building we’re in now. And we’re doing really well. Whereas a lot of other organisations are now falling and suffering we’re doing really well. And we just seem to be going along steadily, growing as we go along. ... when I first took over the university did give us grant funding for about three or four years and without it we wouldn’t have survived.” (Interview with community partner)

One CUP is trying to channel some funds that it is raising to the wider community. It is asking organisations that participate in training on ageing for a nominal contribution, which is in turn used to finance a small grant scheme for older people groups in the community. Another CUP has had a similar way of ensuring that funding benefits more than just one individual. For participation in a research project, learners in adult

education arts courses receive an honorarium that goes towards the purchase of more art materials, which are often scarce. This has avoided competition for the funds from participants on the art course, as well as in-group rivalries.

While the above examples are solid evidence on how CUPs are trying to benefit community members wider than immediate partners in other CUPs there is a perception that wider community benefits are occurring but are not readily identifiable. Often, these perceived benefits were put in the context of cuts of services so that CUP work alleviated some of the impacts of such cuts. One community partner points out the importance of the expected evidence from the CUP in order to sustain these services:

“Sometimes adult learning seems like quite an expensive thing for governments to fund, and they don’t necessarily see the benefits but if we can communicate what the benefits are in terms of prevention agendas, helping people certainly with the resilient side, progressing people not necessarily through a traditional academic platform but in terms of their health, keeping them out of hospitals, and keeping them out of crisis and developing peer support groups within the community that just demonstrates not just from an education point of view but from a health point of view that it’s actually paying its way really, and these partnerships are all over the place, loads of providers, they’re’ kind of holding the fabric of community together often, and when it comes to cuts, they’re the first to go you know, because people just see a sewing class, and they don’t see the value of a sewing class. ... The upshot is and evidence is there for the problem of what happens if people get lonely or people can’t access services or they can’t develop and change. But that doesn’t mean the funding follows unless you can provide the evidence.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Another community partner framed the evidence of CUP impacts in a more general way, making the point that the presence of academics in a community at a time of economic crisis is in itself a positive thing:

“So this project will be there if things do start to unravel the project will be there monitoring and collecting that ... I think it would be really good if the university documented it in a high profile report really. . Yes, a systematic sort of reporting on things. And, you know what it’s like, the increase of attention that things get if it comes from the university, you know, people around here can complain all they like, but someone writes an official report, it could get headlines and could get a lot of attention. So yes” (Interview with community partner)

The CUPs in our sample did often produce outputs that can generate pride of place in terms of determining the story that is told about a certain place or a certain community. An artist describes the value of a co-designed exhibition for the South Asian community:

“And this was exactly what was appealing about this exhibition, that project, it was building up archives for future generations to enjoy. The main feedback we got from the K family, one of the participants (university partner in background: They loved it), was that one of the adults said that hopefully my children can enjoy this. You know, it’s on our website, it’s going to be there for a long time to come. So, they can go back there to find out about the history of their parents and where they come from, because there is a lot.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Another community partner echoes this sense of ownership in a different context:

“So if anything ... that can change the image of [our community] in a positive way, like working with projects with universities and things like that; then the young people involved, especially those with the [CUP], it was taken up by the Guardian, the Telegraph newspapers, they came and interviewed some of our young people. They then ended up in the papers, so their parents were proud, their grandparents were proud. ‘You know I’m in the national newspapers for the right reasons,’ so all of that just feeds into a more positive image. I say all we want is a balanced playing field, not the constant negative. And that’s something, you were talking about that earlier, weren’t you M.? [interviewee talking to a colleague in the background] About how bad a deal that our young people have got, not about that we’ve got some really excellent young people.” (Interview with community partner)

Having an academic partner present in a community can almost mean that there is an improved link from the community to the university, moving the university and its opportunities closer to the community. One academic school governor gives an example for this:

“It’s about relationships I think a lot of this at the end of the day and ... I’ve had lots of ex-pupils and parents, classroom assistants, approach me from [the school], because they know I’m at the university so they’re interested to talk to me about avenues they might find into the university or they’re interested in teacher training and I’m always able to be helpful. It doesn’t always necessarily lead to an outcome that I hear about or know about but it is important isn’t it for everybody in the community to have a network of connections and it’s these networks that are very powerful. “ (Interview with university partner)

Clearly some of these benefits are perceived to be dependent on the notion of CUP working to be non-exploitative and mutually beneficial.

Key Messages:

Community partner organisations entering CUPs have the benefits of their service users at heart and there is evidence that the service users from our case study organisations benefitted from the organisation's involvement in CUP work as follows:

- **Access to wider networks**
- **Access to opportunities that would not be available to them otherwise**
- **Improved self-confidence and self-awareness**
- **Attitude changes towards further and higher education**

A readily recognized and common form of CUP is student placements. These may lead to community partner organisations becoming an important element of students' education, but this is not always acknowledged by universities.

Students benefit not only by improving their learning and approach to academic work but also by expanding their horizons and getting exposure to the practical world or work.

Students benefit from the knowledge staff involved in CUP use in their teaching

Even small CUP projects can make valuable contributions to the wider community.

CUPs themselves can be beneficial for a community by ensuring that some resources for services are still in place despite cuts in spending and by securing the support of academics to advocate on behalf of the community.

CUPs also often have outputs that help communities to re-discover their history and combat stigmatisation and stereotyping.

12. Learning and long-term change

CUPs in our study have managed to move beyond having impacts linked directly to their actions and have managed to bring about long term changes so that some of CUP working principles have become mainstreamed into the organisations involved in the CUP.

Academic partners were often able to embed elements of the learning generated via the CUP into curricula and some VCS organisations are doing things differently on a regular basis as a result of CUP working. CUPs have also sometimes left structures such as networks or communities of practice in their wake, where people can continue to come together and develop their learning over a longer time period. In one case, the CUP generated the first asylum and refugee forum that the locality had ever had.

The issue of succession is very salient for CUP working as some CUPs are concerned that the initiatives rely on certain key individuals who may retire or change jobs. Many of the academics we interviewed tried to train a new generation of engaged academics as a way of achieving long term change bit by bit. One academic comments on this:

“And also ... my PhD student who the [community partners] are mentoring and one of them attended her research ethics committee meeting, and the ethics committee were ... so impressed that she'd gone with a service user mentor. So that kind of thing I think, you know, chips away at all sort of things, it's kind of slow.” (Interview with academic partner)

The topic of succession and how to embed certain attitudes in the system over time is quite closely related to the issue of learning which can maintain a CUP over the long term

12.1. Learning in CUPs

All of the interviewees identified CUPs as processes of learning. The very act of collaborating was a learning experience for the partners involved, which they thought prepared them for further and, potentially, more efficient partnership working.

Maybe the fact that interviewees framed their CUPs as learning journeys is not surprising in light of the fact that generating learning is probably the aim in most CUPs whose main purpose is research in some shape or form. However, it is striking that the interviewees identified learning experiences that were mainly about the process of working with each other, not learning points related to the topic of research involved in CUPs. Key learning experiences can be categorized as follows:

- Testing one's assumptions (seeing the world through someone else's eyes)
- Discovering one's own capacity
- Understanding assets, limitations and requirements of the other side

- Navigating different organisational cultures
- Skills
- Communication skills
- Understanding the benefits of partnership working
- Understanding the importance of flexibility
- How to plan CUP working
- Understanding the value of difference
- Working with new people
- Value of reflexivity/research-mindedness
- Models for joint working
- New ideas

The following quotes are examples of the learning experiences above.

“I learnt that all of us are boundaried in where we believe we could/should impact other practices -- and that the activities or actions we assume people want to get involved in, based on their critique of the system, are not always correct. It reminded me to constantly challenge assumptions in how/why people want to get involved.” (Memory story about consulting with community partners)

“I was so relieved and completely surprised. That day I learned that my work can actually be respected by academics and that they are not rocket scientists.” (Community partner memory story about presenting one’s work to an academic audience)

“I’ve learned about schools of participation. Palo Frere is one of the core thinkers for our youth and community work and we’ve always talked about the theory and the stuff here but the schools of participation and stuff is actually doing it in practice so I’ve been trained if you like to do that work which is now much more embedded into our course.” (Interview with academic)

“My whole thinking about [teaching mental health in universities] has radically shifted and developed, and part of that has been enrolling on the doctoral programme in educational research and thinking about education theory.... But I think the other part of that has been being involved with [the CUP] and that’s partly a very personal experiential kind of level in terms of thinking ... what I’m learning from [the CUP].” (Interview with academic)

“The [CUP] has given us the confidence to value what we’ve got, value how we can contribute and recognise that, yes, academic individuals have a skills base, but we also have a skills base and, actually, it’s a complementary process.” (Interview with community partners)

“The first and most obvious lesson, it’s fair to say neither of us could have sort of done this by ourselves. Well, we could have put on a conference if we wanted, but why would we want to do that by ourselves? ... So there’s so much more to be getting from

working together, it's a more fruitful relationship and that is a simple lesson." (Academic partner in an interview with CUP partners)

"Not only are you talking about process, you're talking about how people implement processes, I'd be very clear now about what would be required, and what our role would be, and what we would want to be written into that to ensure that our end user group don't just get treat as widgets in the process." (Interview with community partners)

"It's important that you get that, you can't determine that your services are the best services, you can't live in fear because it's actually about changing practice and research helps to change practice, and that's what we've got to take on board." (Community partner in an interview with CUP partners)

"I do think that sometimes your work is quite hectic and quite loaded that you can push some things away, and think "do you know what? I just can't take that on at the moment", and you can't see sometimes that this something can be useful. So I think yes, maybe it has taught me that you can be quite in a tunnel just getting on with your day to day stuff, this is outside of that that it's got its purpose and it will be of use." (Community partner in joint interview with CUP partners)

"It's very exciting and challenging because you are learning so much all the time, because you're not just sitting in the university reading books or just going out interviewing people, you're actually working in partnership with people. So you have to deal with conflict, you have to deal with a range of different perspectives and it forces you to see things in different ways forces you to give up your usual way of working to experiment." (Interview with academic)

"[Going to different meetings], from a personal point of view a real insight, so, you know it's compare and contrast; my organisation works in this way, yours works in this way, there's something wildly different that's what gets interesting." (Community partner in a joint interview with CUP partners)

"Definitely, I think I've learned to trust that it develops in the right way at the right time, you know, you can't force things because they have their priorities and their times schedules and their needs, and I have mine." (Academic in a joint interview with CUP partners)

"There's also been a lot learning in terms of doing research with multiple partners and the difficulties involved in how you actually handle it, from a managerial and administrative perspective actually." (Academic in a joint interview with CUP partners)

"There was a person there who was a teacher and he was then volunteering in the museum and I said 'oh, you know, I'm going [there] and I'm just going around seeing where this research was done'. Thinking, you know, someone like a teacher who had lived [there] and ran the local museum would be bound to know what to me was a major

book. And he said ‘oh that’s interesting, when did this get published?’ ...you know it’s kind of a lesson to academics, that stuff that we think is important and we use in our teaching, in our research, that sort of thing, can pass by the people in the communities about which the study has been undertaken.” (Interview with academic)

“I don’t know whether it just reinforced what we knew when we came into it, is that we have different strengths and have complementary strengths, but that it is quite hard to get the most out of them.” (Interview with community partner)

The following section goes into more detail with regard to how learning takes place in CUPs.

12.2. Learning through the doing

Most of the community and university partners interviewed for the project emphasized strongly that CUPs tend to be a work in progress, rather than something that is predictable. However, rather than highlighting this as problematic they accepted the fact that ideas about the CUP, its purpose and outcomes kept evolving in the course of CUPs and this was a valuable learning through the doing process.

The following quote from a community partner whose CUP has evolved quite significantly over time illustrates the unpredictability of CUP working:

“If I’m totally honest, we were approached, somebody said “there’s some money in it for you”. We thought, “We can do that! We can get families [as research participants]! We have families every day! You want families and you’ll pay us to get families?” That was in our minds, to be honest with you, that was as simplistic as it was, and I based it on our previous experiences, working with [other university partners] and I just thought “yeah, I can get families to be involved in this”. I’d no idea that it would be so big, so varied, would take us all over Europe, that wasn’t even the plan that, we would engage children and young people like we did, that we’d end up at the United Nations.” (Interview with community partners)

When perceiving CUPs in this light, then obstacles and challenges encountered during the development of the CUP are just another learning opportunity. This might explain why very few interviewees brought up negatives about the CUP in question.

One academic partner whose only mode of working is now CUP-based recalls her first experience of trying to reach out to the community and getting a very rude answer. Rather than letting this determine the relationship going forward, this academic has reframed her experience as valuable learning:

“...it was really good, it was such a baptism of fire. ... what that taught me was quite interesting because I did, what I did then was

actually rang her up and apologised and said 'look I'm really sorry about this, can I come and see you?'. And then I went to see her and then we got on really well, and then she commissioned me to do a piece of research, and we just talked through what was the issue and that was a massive learning experience for me, really it's a key learning experience in my relationships in this work."
(Interview with academic partner)

One community partner commented on the fact that learning about processes that can sometimes seem tedious is a good investment:

“Academic partner: And then it's the ethics that has to be got through. So the planning side of it is quite long, isn't it?

Community partner: I think it is, from an organisation perspective, I think it is the first time you go through it. But then once you've done it once, you know, "oh, this is the ethics bit, yeah" and it's so, it's just, it doesn't take ... very much time. It's just the first time when you're not sure." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Seeing Cups as an ongoing learning through the doing basis, rather than as one-off transactions, makes sense in terms of being able to build on the investment partners have made into the relationship. Although some of the learning might be transferable to partnering with someone else, much of the learning that accrues is specific to the partnership itself. As one community partner explains about her second collaboration with the same academic partner: "You don't have to start from scratch, explaining how each other works, you could go 'ok, I know how you like things done now, you know how chaotic it is here and so the way it is'. So there is an understanding, so it's easier to then build on that." (Interview with community partner)

An academic and a community partner who set up a research centre in partnership reflect on how situations that can seem really daunting at the time generate learning and trust that contributes to the long term development of the partnership. The first part of the passage is about the process of drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding; the second part is about different organisational cultures:

“Academic partner: Yes, yes and [the process of putting in place a Memorandum of Understanding] tested the trust I think. And that's a good thing because it shows the commitment on both sides and it's made it easy to operate. I think it forced us to think about things, and agree about certain things, ... so in retrospect, after a year and a half, a lot more understanding and acceptance of that process, however painful that was.

.....

And I was in tears, I was like, I don't even understand the language, I just don't know it and my partner, thank God, works for a charity, so translated it to me into terms that I can understand and I was on the phone to him, yes, I'm hyperventilating and I don't know what to do with this

Community partner This one was before the police very kindly gave us event planners, so at that stage we thought we had to do a lot ourselves....

Academic partner: And I was like absolutely in the headlight. So but that was in itself a good learning curve, because it was about different cultures and different needs, and how do you use that to both our advantages, not to let that clash, but actually use it." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

As the quote above shows, academics learn as much in CUPs as community partners and sometimes the university as an institution needs to learn how to deal with CUPs, as an academic who is doing the leg work for a multi-sited CUP research project points out:

"For the university that I work at as well as being myself personally this particular project has been quite a learning experience in terms of what we were just saying earlier about the sort of management and administration and so on, probably, and I've had to actually take some of the people of this project by the hand to get things done really, and that's I think next time around, things would then become easier because people should have worked through kind of teething problems about financial administration , things like this." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Learning how to cherish differences, rather than letting different cultures, skills sets and ways of working get in the way of partnerships, is a key element for making CUPs work. As one academic points out, there is no point in partnering up with someone who is just like you: "why do you have a partner if you're just the same just doing it yourself. You know we have, with romantic partners we want a bit of difference in our life, don't we?" (Interview with academic partner)

Addressing differences was perceived to be at the heart of CUPs, so it is important to maintain awareness of that, whilst finding common ground: "it's asking that question 'what have we got in common? What brings us together?' being very aware that are lots and lots of things that, you know, separate us."(Interview with academic partner)

One could argue that CUP working, similar to other cross-sector partnerships, is basically about transforming differences into an asset, rather than an obstacle. However, arguably, CUPs face more challenges than other cross-sector partnerships,

simply because of the divergent aims and objectives that characterize the organisations involved in them. A frontline charity partnering with a statutory agency, on the other hand, would seem easier in comparison, because at least both of the agencies would be interested in delivering the same service to communities. In CUPs, on the other hand, partners are from organisations with markedly different objectives and missions.

12.3. Learning to Address Tensions

The ways in which the CUPs in our sample navigate difficulties and resulting conflict from these highlights the necessity of learning to confront potential sources of conflict head-on, rather than trying to gloss them over.

Part of it is to pay attention to power dynamics. This presupposes a highly reflexive attitude, which is described in the following two quotes:

“We’re looking to inform professional work from research and writing, from enquiry, from discourse, from problematising situations. Now there is a danger when that occurs that academics can over complicate situations, and in fact that’s what we’re paid to do, we’re paid to problematise. So it’s in our DNA almost. Now I’ve been in situations... where teachers have found that frustrating, they feel that academics are too concerned with ideas and discussing and arguing ideas rather than the practicality of life and professional work. And I just think that that is a matter of balance and that there are times when one wants to be very thoughtful and reflective, and there are times when we demand that our students are thoughtful and reflective, but it’s reflective about practice, it’s reflective about professional actions and behaviours. So I don’t see the two to be in any way mutually exclusive and I have to say, whenever I do go into a school, I kind of, I do this unconsciously, I haven’t thought about this, I kind of switch and I ensure that I am pragmatic and realistic and don’t slip into academic mode because I know, I know it will be appreciated to a degree, but not in other respects.”(Interview with academic partner)

In this case, being reflective about oneself, one’s professional ethos and how that might be perceived by one’s partners is helping an academic school governor to respond to inherent power dynamics and prevent conflict. Another academic describes a similar process in the quote below.

“One of the tensions is that people often want me to do things ... because I have all these identities [including a strong community partner identity as the director of a social enterprise and community practitioner]. ... I’ll ... email them and say ‘I can’t do it, but I got my wonderful friends you can have one of them’, and they say, ‘no, we

want you; we're changing the date. ... it's not very nice for other people because then probably they feel that people don't want them sometimes, which is bad enough anyway, because people often give professors more time, space and an elevated identity, anyway, which isn't very good. ...But often what I try and do is hide my other identities just so other people can be in that role." (Interview with academic partner)

In this case, the academic displays a highly reflexive attitude towards different identities and describes her strategy of ensuring that her partners in any given CUP are enabled to step into certain roles and feel valued, thus preventing potential friction between partners.

Whereas the two quotes above illustrate how awareness of power dynamics in a CUP enables partners to address them, the memory story below, written by a community partner, shows the unexpected problems that can happen if power dynamics are not taken into account.

"Working on a project that was a university community partnership with a number of stakeholders I found I became quite confused by some of the reactions of the people around me when they responded in ways that did not make sense to me. I was very enthusiastic and had been excited during initial set up meetings as at that time everyone seemed to share excitement at the prospect of working together, however, over time attitudes seemed to subtly shift. I could not see any external reasons for this shift as I thought everyone would get on really well. Over time I began to realise that there were some other dynamics occurring below the surface that were affecting people's responses. I realised that there were tensions created by the similarity of the roles people were in. There were some quite complex dynamics occurring as toes were being stepped on. I realised that people's agendas are really important and must be carefully considered as a lot may be happening below the surface." (Community partner memory story)

Several community partners refer to the need to learn to face up to problems, rather than putting one's head in the sand. One of the community partners described CUPs as "different groups coming together is like the dance of the porcupines, the only way you can do it is to stand face to face, because any other way you're going to spike each other." (Interview with community partners) Another community partner referred to the need for a level-headed mature approach: "So you're never going to get everyone working together but as long as you can have a mature attitude towards it and you know what your goal is, you just carry on." (Interview with community partner)

One way of bringing problems out in the open is, of course, communication and making space for social encounters. As one academic partner recommends:

“I think sharing information, sharing anxieties is a great one. It’s like any relationship, you don’t talk and you each go away sit and worry or stress in a different corner, you know, it can come to blows. I think sharing worries, anxieties as well as, you know, achievements I think is very important. And acknowledging the other party’s challenges, difficulties and respecting those and what it’s doing to them, I think again is very important. So, you know, attend to the things that are good for a relationship, full stop. I mean it’s more complex in institutional relationships because you might have to encourage a colleague to do something similar or what have you, but I still think those kinds of relationship ground rules are ones that you let into.” (Interview with academic partner)

Clearly, this is more feasible and also more important in a long-term relationship, rather than in one that is a short transaction. As one university partner who is part of an international longitudinal study that involves partnering with charities puts it:

“I suppose the benefit of a long term relationship is that you can kind of have those conversations in a very open way, explore them if changes need to be made, changes kind of can be made. I suppose that is a benefit for longer term relationships is in once it is clear, this is a broader point, but once it’s clear what the mutual benefit is to multiple partners within this sort of relationship then you can identify how serious or otherwise a tension might be. There’re always differences to kind of negotiate about should we be looking at that, one partner is interested in looking at that, one partner is less interested in looking at that, should we be, you know, should we be engaging in that particular policy, but we just negotiate these.” (Interview with university partner)

This shows the importance of being honest about existing tensions in a CUP, rather than trying to gloss them over. Conflicts can be avoided by partners becoming more self-aware of the identity they bring to the partnership and all the implications that has for how they expect to work and for relationships with partners. As we have seen above, long-term relationships enable partners to build enough trust to be honest about existing or potential issues and one crucially important way of ensuring this is to create spaces for social interaction between partners to get to know each other.

A key difference between parties involved in a CUP is the different levels of capacity. Not surprisingly, quite a few people on our sample referred to learning about the needs and capacity of their partner or themselves as a key learning point. What emanated from these conversations is that for a CUP to be mutual and even-handed does not

necessarily mean that every activity has to always involve everyone. Whilst it is probably not a good idea to make assumptions about one's partner's potential capacity to be involved in the CUP, this goes either way: some partners want to be less involved than is assumed, others more than is assumed. One of our memory stories captures this issue quite vividly:

"I was involved in a consultation exercise with community organisations and university staff. In a conversation with one participant, a service user, he provided some really critical feedback on how university staff could change their behaviour when working with others. We then moved to collectively discuss how the university might adapt to better work with the organisations represented at the meeting. At this point he stated that he could not participate in the discussion because he was proud of the university and it was not appropriate for him to set new agendas for universities to work to -- they needed to do this themselves, and he trusted them to do it.

I was really surprised that, having provided some really challenging comments, he felt unwilling to participate in helping the university change its behaviour. I learnt that all of us are boundaried (?) in where we believe we could/should impact other practices -- and that the activities or actions we assume people want to get involved in, based on their critique of the system, are not always correct. It reminded me to constantly challenge assumptions in how/why people want to get involved." (Memory story)

Although this example is not from a CUP, strictly speaking, it is still about the importance of questioning assumptions about partner's capacity and potential involvement in something. In a conversation that evolved during a joint interview of CUP partners who are part of a community of practice (CoP) around mental health, there was a clear tension between the information the university partner was sharing and the willingness of the community partner to receive it, as the implication was taking more responsibility of the CoP:

"All I'm saying is that the group has always been fragile I'm just wondering to what extent, cause I'm also aware, you know I suddenly had this image when we were talking earlier of this little seedling of a group that needs to be somehow protected and so some of that has been created through this discussion for me but I'm just wondering whether that might have happened for you too in the sense that not necessarily just [through] this discussion but [through] the Google group that things have just come ...more to the surface that make you aware of that. And you know when you start going to a group if there's a programme then it probably does feel more secure because you don't know what the funding situation

is and I suppose the reason I'm saying that is I think that links back to the question about making all that more public that in a way that draws people in, it shares out the power a bit, [but] it also shares out the anxiety and the sense of vulnerability and sometimes what people want from a group is to know that it's going to happen every month" (University partner in a joint interview with CUP partners)

Again, the self-confidence and ability of taking a more active role is something that might evolve over time. Community partners might have started out in the CUP with a very limited perception of their role, but then realized over time that they had more to contribute than they themselves and their university partner had realized:

"Once the process started and we did indeed engage the families, more issues came up that [our university partners] were looking towards to assess So our status of the partnership over three years, and I think that helps, you get three years to develop that relationship. So our status of the partnership over three years did indeed get to very much an equal status, and in some cases appropriately actually raised above the status of the academics so there were kinds of peaks and troughs. Generally across the three year period, after about the first six months, we recognised that we were an equal partner, but I don't think that's probably how we were initially considered." (Interview with community partners)

An accurate pattern of how partners in a CUP interact and how they divide roles and tasks develops over time. While there may be a perception by some that true equity can only happen where roles and responsibilities are shared equally, for our interviewees it was clear that a CUP can be quite equitable whilst also acknowledging different levels of capacity or willingness to get involved.

One of the processes that demand quite a lot in terms of capacity and commitment is co-production. This is a topic that the next section will talk about.

12.4. Learning to do Co-production

Interviewees suggested that co-production is one of the key aspirations of CUPs. This is where partners genuinely work together to co-produce knowledge, rather than the community partner relying on academic expertise to tell them what to do. Co-production occurs when there is a genuine realisation that both parties have knowledge, albeit in different forms, that can be shared to mutual benefit and to create more learning and knowledge. Co-production can be lengthy and messy, which is probably why it does not happen as often as partners desired and required partners to learn the most suitable approaches for achieving co-production. As has been alluded to at the beginning of this report, funding and ethics regimes make co-production a challenge as well.

In our sample, there are quite a few examples of CUPs co-producing knowledge, but there are also examples of the obstacles that stand in the way of this. The following will focus on the instances in which co-production has happened.

In one case, co-production occurred throughout a research project about children. However, this happened over the lifetime of the project, rather than from the beginning. It is clear, however, from the quote below that co-produced knowledge did add significantly to the impact of the project:

“Community partner 1: they were the first young people to ever address a Day of General Discussion concerning children and the Convention for the Rights of the Child, and I think the policy makers were, and the organisers of the event were quite surprised because it was the best-attended day of General Discussion they’d ever had. I think they considered it to be quite a minor topic, and actually there was a very large representation, because lots of people have been working in this area for decades and have a lot to say, so it was very important that those young people shared their experience and made a massive impact.

Interviewer: so the whole idea of involving young people, was that there from the beginning? What that written into the bid?

Community partner 2: You see that’s the dilemma. I don’t think it was. I think child centredness was written into the bid, but because we didn’t actually see the whole bid because we came in at the implementation stage rather than the pre-plan, I think of course as a University they would have said “you can’t research children without really making it, in today’s world, coming from a child centred perspective, but they could have ticked that box just by interviewing the children, and asking them maybe to contribute to the development of the questions....

Community partner 1: To some extent they have to be in order to kind of ensure that rigor but I think the child centeredness element developed [during the process of CUP working], *what we mean* by child centeredness” (Interview with community partners)

Although the community partners were, overall, really happy and inspired by their CUP, they concluded from the above experience that for co-production to occur it is necessary to for all partners to be equally involved in a CUP from the beginning.

One community partner started out very skeptical of the value of working with academics or students was pleased to see the difference co-production makes:

“We brought community voices into direct contact with the students in the early sessions of the course, and from the students listening to those community voices and having further discussions with them the project title was developed and the actual work for the project was clearly to meet the express need of the community organisation. And we had some wonderful projects, didn’t we, especially the second year, this last year, some really, really fantastic projects.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

An academic who used to be involved in a student placement scheme comments on the importance on co-producing the CUP proposal from the beginning, in order to ensure that both partners get what they need out of the work:

“You can still publish in the academic arena, the work that you’re doing, even if it is participative work, except that depends on the nature of the participation. So I’ve worked with some groups who then say ‘No, we don’t want his published. What’s the point of that?’ So there’s a capacity thing there about how do you build a participative project from the outset that makes it possible for the academics to still do what they have to do and the community groups do what they have to do. So you need to raise the idea of publication at the beginning.” (Interview with academic partner)

A conversation during a joint interview with CUP partners who are collaborating on a research project about adult education suggests that co-production has wider benefits including for service users, partner organisations, as well as helping partners to come up with a more valid approach to research. The quote below illustrates that service users benefited from co-production by realizing that they as a group have shared concerns and experiences. The questions service users asked the community partner organisation about the research project and its usefulness also shed light on service users’ motivations for using the service the organisation provides. This, in turn benefited the organisation:

“Community partner: Yeah, and the peer model, the focus group sessions we did, I’m sure they sort of come to this conclusion anyway, but I think what they find helpful is realising that other people are in a similar situation, so a focus group rather than a kind of individual interview which they might, you know, obviously you have a dialogue with the interviewer which makes you think, but I think a lot of them sort of expressed the views that probably make them realise they’re not alone, saying like they didn’t feel like coming and it’s been helpful and actually acknowledging each other’s work and the talent they feel each other have got is a good extra, rather than simply being the tutor sitting in front of everyone, people supporting each other. So that’s something that wouldn’t

necessarily come out [otherwise], because again they're only tiny courses, they're only an hour and a half and if you want to get your head down and do art ..., that can be the only thing that you don't necessarily think about

Academic partner: That's right, yeah, and realising you're not alone and also that your experiences are kind of wider socio political sort of issue as well

Community partner: Yeah, ... we've had a little bit of feedback which we wouldn't necessarily get through the paperwork, around people wondering why we're asking them about health and wellbeing questions, or it's got nothing to do with my mental health, you know, actually having the space to have those discussions is quite useful in terms of development and thinking about the motivation of why people come and what they want from the courses, it's quite useful.

...

Academic partner: I will just quickly add to that, I think there has also been a kind of a challenge for this project to be sort of trying to frame things in terms of mental health and wellbeing. You know if the courses aren't necessarily on that....

Community partner: Yeah, well just the definition of mutual recovery, something we came up with and now there's been a lot of debates on interpretation, but that's been interesting." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Coming up with a more valid research approach, as in the example above, is one benefit of co-production but co-production can also help with the practical side of actually carrying out research in a practice context. The quote below is from a Local Authority worker who is collaborating in academic research, which involved pitching the idea of participating to members of the public who got in touch with the Local Authority department for other reasons:

"The question that we had to ask, I mean it was only really one question. When people phoned up to enquire ... we wanted to introduce what [our CUP is] doing. So at first we had this blurb, this information that we were going to say, so we were going to say and it was quite long ... and that was looked at by everybody so all of the people that were going to ask the questions ... and we revamped it ... that was enforced around quite a group of people until we came up with something that was actually useable because obviously ... what you've got to think about is the person that was actually on the telephone and how they were going to try and

explain what we were asking of them. We all did input into that until everybody felt that ... it was the right way to ask what we were looking for and so I would say that we certainly felt that we can input and that was a very useful exercise, particularly, you know, it was going all over the place, quite amusing, but we did get to a point where I think everybody was quite satisfied that they were going to ask something that came across in the right way, was easy to ask for the person that was actually asking the question.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One CUP has utilized social and other media to make a historical collection more relevant and building knowledge about its contents: “in the development of the website, we actually put a request out in the newspapers and Facebook, could people identify locations or people. And that generated an awful lot of interest, so that was fantastic and that helped us, as I say working with [citizens] to actually document the collection in greater depth.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

In another example, co-production has been instrumental in rolling out nationally a pioneering student placement programme that utilized service users as trainers:

“It’s been a very constructive and productive and hopefully mutually beneficial relationship that I’ve had with [the charity] and particularly with [the chief executive] and her colleagues too and members of their organisation.... So for example, in the very first year of our academic course here at the university we decided to have [the placement] scheme for our first-year undergraduate students, and so the relationship with [the charity] started straight away ... what was complex was the experience of specing out [our university] as the first outreach from [the charity] and our experiences could feed into the development of reaching out for [the charity], the development of the training pack and all of those things. I mean we weren’t the only university but we were the first place of outreach. But that was very exciting for us actually for our students.” (Interview with academic partner)

Co-production can also be crucial in devising methods of research that are ethical in the practice context where they are employed. A youth worker who is part of a CUP reflects on the process of involving young people in the co-production of a book:

“[The young people] didn’t want to tell real ghost stories, because they were afraid they were going to invoke the ghosts, their thoughts, or their feelings and make it real, so like people in the “olden days” where they’d tell nursery rhymes and they would pass on knowledge and information by poetry and by, you know, bards and knowledge is transferred through mythologies, stories, a good

example is Little Red Riding Hood is about a girl's menstruation, coming into womanhood and obviously the wolf represents the Blue Beard aspect of masculinity, which is very dangerous, eh, so yeah, the girls actually did that instinctively. They made it safe, they made it transferable, the knowledge, in a safe way. [My academic partner] enabled that process by listening and being very tentative and caring. And my initial bit was to ensure that the girls were safe, from a youth work perspective and they certainly were. We had to go through the ethical process and then [the academic] worked with the girls ... and, gosh, there it is [pointing to the book]." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Co-production from a community partner's point of view is also important to ensure that, firstly, the knowledge that comes from a CUP is actually useful and, secondly, is actually used throughout the organisation, rather than only by those who are directly involved in research: "one of my colleagues in the communications team might look at that and give some input about media messaging or somebody from the services team might look at it and say something else, you know, so it's the whole charity that can contribute as well." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Another community partner highlighted the importance of co-production by referring to the missed opportunities when CUP partners are not fully involved in co-production:

"I mean it slightly comes back to this kind of unrequited, or rather unfulfilled potential and maybe [the] collaboration will conclude and we'll still be saying we never quite capitalised on the potential of it. But I think, I totally believe, and I believe that lots of people in [our charity] believe that, if we could divert ourselves away a little bit from the project implementation and from fundraising, to look at what's emerging from this longitudinal studies, that the findings are fascinating and that the findings should shape every proposal that we write, and the findings should shape every policy discussion that we have. ... I just think it is this continuous sense of if we can get the best out of the academics and they out of us, the practitioners, then that's a great partnership.

....

I mean I think you've got one policy coordinator, that's just nothing. If we had a team of fairly articulate and inspired and motivated people who were constantly promoting this and making sure that, I mean we're working on like forty proposals at the same time, if that person was making sure that the data from [the study] was under each of those people writing the forty proposals, we'd be using it in our own design as much as we're using it externally." (Interview with community partner)

Co-production as an ongoing process also can secure support and legitimacy, as one community partner points out: "... the whole idea of coming up with something that feels like a shared vision, although it's not too bolted down, you know, we're not contractually obligated to serve up a particular vision, you know, it's actually just a live dialogue. And as we move forward and we bring other people into that, there is sense in which people are feeding that, but also kind of buying into it." (Joint interview with CUP partners). This shows that co-production is an excellent way of securing buy-in from partners, participants and stakeholders – a prerequisite for a successful CUP.

12.5. Sharing the learning

In light of the fact that a key aspect of learning that is generated by CUPs is about the very process of partnership working, the question is to what extent this type of learning is actually shared more widely and thus given a chance to contribute to a growing body of material about CUP working itself. When we interviewed partners jointly, they sometimes commented on the fact that it was quite helpful to have the opportunity to reflect together on the partnership. In one case, the partners even seemed to anticipate that the interview would have this effect and asked for the interview to be timed to tie in with an evaluation exercise of the CUP. This suggests that CUP partners do not often have the time to reflect about their own processes of working together. Therefore, much of the learning may be intuitive, rather than conscious, which might in turn inhibit the ability to apply it later.

Whilst making reflective space is important in order to embed the learning with and from each other for the purpose of the partnership itself it is also important for the wider field of public engagement. During the interview many of the participants commented on the fact that it was quite important to pass on some of the learning to colleagues in order to raise awareness about their CUPs model of working together. This is an issue that is closely linked to the question of organisational support discussed earlier. As one public engagement practitioner pointed out: "The awareness of the administration and the faculty about CUP is still very low. That makes improvement difficult. We have money, but institutional support and understanding is necessary too." (Future of CUP interviews) In this context, another colleague comments on the need to define the work that CUPs do:

"Community partnership working needs to be built in to reward and recognition structures in scholarly terms, but for this to happen the work actually needs to be scholarly. We need to be clear where research is. It is not there clearly enough in the employment contract for researchers and this needs attention and definition. We don't know sufficiently well how to describe this work. We need to ease the bureaucracy e.g. around budgets, personnel. This links back to recognition. Building partnership work into the curriculum is also important." (Future of CUP interviews)

An academic who used to be involved in a large student placement scheme notes the importance of educating audiences within and outside of the university about CUP working:

“Whoever was running [the scheme] did a lot of work in both directions trying to keep understanding of it and the possibilities on the agenda and would come and talk to students or come and talk to tutors, come and talk to whole department groups and so on about it as well as circulating information.” (Interview with academic partner)

Sometimes individuals engaged in CUP working are invited to share their knowledge with colleagues: “And I suppose that at the higher level there is quite a lot of support for what I’m doing and they’ve asked me to lead on a seminar.” (Academic partner in a joint interview with CUP partners) However, as one academic points out, it is then up to those who have received this knowledge to implement it in their own practice: “We run seminars in the university on partnership working and I contribute to that and talk about what worked well in ... projects that I’ve done, what did not work well and why and what people can learn. My belief is that I share that information and it’s for other researchers to pick that up.” (Interview with academic partner)

For some academics, sharing their knowledge with others or instigating discussions about CUP working in unexpected places is a strategy to make the overall environment in their university less adverse to CUP working:

“It is an adverse context I think, so resilience within that is to try and pick the things that are going to help you steer your way through that and also at the same time change it, I think, I think I know my work has been about trying to work at the kind of individual level ... but also systemically trying to change the conditions of community university partnership, not necessarily with any success but to try... to support the change in a sort of more systemic change in some of these ways of relating. Supporting the establishment of the UK Community Partner Network is one example of this. And another is that every time I get asked to do a talk, I always ask if a community partner could go instead of me, or alongside me. Often people reply that they don’t have the funding to pay for a community partner, or that wasn’t what they were planning. But I try to stir up these kinds of discussions a lot in the system.” (Interview with academic partner)

When it comes to trying to convince people, the strong passion for CUP working that some interviewees had was sometimes counteracted by a certain sense of futility: “I mean over the years I think I’ve got very good at arguing my case do you know what I mean and I’ve done presentations ... you know, and talked to them about partnership

working and that sort of stuff and it's ridiculous cause things that you and I, because we're involved with community development things, that we take so much for granted about participation and stuff. But there are some people, particularly because they worked in schools all their lives, who have no idea." (Interview with academic partner)

A similar feeling is expressed by a community partner: "Ideally more people need to understand what it's really all about. And I find myself saying now even about some of my colleagues, you know I don't think they quite get it, they haven't really quite got it." (Interview with community partner)

But there is also the experience among people in the study that an effort of making people understand is worthwhile: "You know it's a lot about educating colleagues, educating admin and clerical support and so on and so forth. But once people have got the message, they go "oh, I see now" but because the sort of default position is the medical model, social model initiatives are poorly understood." (Interview with academic partner)

Approaching communications with colleagues in a pro-active manner is described as very helpful way of sharing learning by an academic partner who is part of a CUP-driven research project:

"Academic partner: I've had problems with the legal team before with my previous collaboration project because they were tending to treat the community organisation as though they were research participants rather than research partners and wanting all sorts of legal assurances and things. So this time I was very wary and I spoke to the person in the legal team quite early on and explained what it was and tried to work out what would be the best way to do the agreement and ... they've been relatively helpful and quite quick. ...

Interviewer: *so it does require talking to people and getting their buy-in almost.*

Academic partner: Yes, it does really, yes.

Interviewer: *you mentioned the collaboration agreement earlier as a new idea. Who had that idea, did it come from the administration?*

Academic partner: Yes, because I rang them up just to say, because I was struggling, I was thinking how, I'd already started sort of drafted out some sort of agreement that we might have, and I rang them up just to say, what would be the best approach. ... so it was the person in the legal team who said, when I'd explained what the project was, sounds like it could be a collaboration agreement." (Interview with academic partner)

Interviewees in our sample also appreciated the ability to discuss their work with likeminded peers, both for support with emerging issues and in order to feel part of a community. One university partner whose remit is public engagement commented on the need for spaces to meet specifically for discussing this type of work, rather than having to meet on the sidelines of other conferences.¹⁷

An academic whose expertise is in collaborative research describes the advantage of having a research centre that brings likeminded people together to share learning:

“It’s very valuable because our centre has got a range of different partners involved in it so we have academics from different departments research students community organisations representatives on the steering committees ... We are just feeding ideas of each other, we are gaining strength from each other, so we feel in our centre of course, the kind of work we do is the norm. We’re talking about it, we kind of approve it, each project we do we learn something new. We try to learn ways of doing it better and promoting more and shifting the university a bit. So I think the centre has been very, very important, to sort of reinforce the ways of working that we’re trying to do.” (Interview with academic)

Ensuring that the knowledge does not only reside in the partners themselves, but is extended to a wider group is also important for the sustainability of the CUP. At a workshop about CUPs in Manchester, participants stressed the need to strengthen organisational memory and develop a culture of good hand-over so that learning is not lost.¹⁸

As one academic partner in our study commented: “I think I’m the only person who’s on a permanent contract... the opportunity costs of [the CUP] ending are massive, because you would lose some of the core resources, so you do what you can to institutionalise things, but a lot of expertise resides in individuals, that’s not just [our CUP], but it’s a common problem across both our wonderful sectors.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Another academic commented on the way contracts are given to researchers and how this prevents knowledge from staying in one institution:

“So we’ve got people researchers working with community partners, maybe researchers amongst community partners who, these boundary crossing people, but people need to have an

¹⁷ Future of Cupp Interviews, September 2013

¹⁸ ESRC Take Part workshop, Manchester, September 2013

income and if ... research opportunities are requiring this, you know, figure who is very flexible about what they do, where they do it, and for what amount of pay, and those sorts of things, then you know, ... some people are just going to say, 'I'm going to do something with a bit more security.' So I think that would be something for research councils and career planners in university HR departments, to kind of take on board about the very short term nature of, you've got some research funding, you've got a post let's fill it and not think about kind of career development." (Interview with academic partner)

Quite a few of our academic participants were on the verge of retiring, which brought the issue of maintaining learning into focus. An academic, who is very involved in CUP working, but is on her way to retirement discussed her conundrum:

"Yeah, I have retired beginning end of September so I'm part time now...so we're looking at ways of getting other people like, you know, there's a new member of staff who's got a PHD in Participation and the REGEN community background and so we're talking to him about getting more involved so that he understands it. So hopefully the work would continue even if I wasn't here. And [another colleague] because she's been here about four years now, ... so she's got a good understanding of what we do so hopefully it'll work. And I hope at some point the university might decide 'Oh yeah, that's a good idea, let's expand it!'" (Interview with academic partner)

Another academic partner had just taken over the CUP from a retiring colleague, who was keen for the initiative to continue, so passionate individuals involved in CUP working do try to ensure that their legacy is continued. On the other hand, this does not always work and it is surprising how quickly even long-lasting CUPs can be forgotten. As one community partner in a very long-lived student placement scheme observes: "These things when they go, the memory goes and I would suspect that the VCs who were involved retired around about that time, so a lot of the key players just disappeared. I think that would probably be one reason." (Interview with community partner)

A small number of CUPs operated on the principle of deliberately not communicating about the partnership and its benefits in the university, for fear of encountering adverse reactions from the university administration. This has been touched upon at the beginning of this report and clearly harks back to the perception that people "just would not understand." In these situations learning is hard to share, but as the above suggests, sharing learning more widely is crucial in order to make CUP working more resilient overall. Sharing learning more widely would ensure that the overall profile for CUP working was raised and that it is not entirely dependent on selected individuals'

knowledge and expertise.

Key Messages:

Partners in successful CUPs accept that partnership working is an ongoing learning experience.

Much of the learning that goes on in CUPs is not about research findings, but instead about the processes of partnership working.

Differences are part and parcel of CUPs; therefore success depends on learning how to address these differences.

Overcoming difficulties together forges trust and builds partnership. Tensions are more easily defused in long-term relationships.

Partners who make an effort to become aware of power dynamics underlying their CUP can take practical steps to address these.

CUPs are facilitated by paying attention to the social aspect of the interaction between partners.

Equity and fairness in CUPs is compatible with different levels of involvement by different partners and, if applicable, varying levels of involvement over the course of a CUP.

Co-production is the standard core aspiration of CUP working. When partners learned ways of achieving co-production the following benefits were achieved:

- ***Ensuring that CUPs have mutual benefit***
- ***Enhancing impact and quality of research***
- ***Generating appropriate and ethically sensitive research approaches***
- ***Enabling practice-relevant outputs***
- ***Securing buy-in and ownership***

Because of the importance of individual relations and leadership in CUPs, expertise often resides in one person. Training a new generation of engaged academics and practitioners, as well as sharing learning more widely with colleagues and stakeholders is crucial.

There is a problem with retaining CUP expertise within academic institutions due to the short-term nature of research contracts.

Partners in CUPs are not often given the space to reflect on their experiences. Therefore, a crucial precondition to embedding and sharing learning is not being met. Spaces and events to do this and to share learning should be created

13. CUPs and the Future

We asked participants for their sense of the future, both for their own CUP and for CUP working in general.

For those CUPs with an ongoing horizon, in many cases there were future plans in place or at least being thought about. Sometimes these came in the shape of doing more of the same thing; in other cases they were about growing or changing in some way. This depended on the age and maturity of the CUP. Not surprisingly, forming CUPs were very optimistic about the future and saw opportunities everywhere. In expanding CUPs, an important issue was often the question of whether to formalize things more going forwards. In ambivalent CUPs, the ambivalence was often triggered by changes in the operating environment or funding insecurity, but also by the realisation of CUP partners that a CUP is not per se an end in itself in the absence of a meaningful mission. For example, this category had CUPs that had come to a natural end due to time-limited funding but wished to explore opportunities for continuing the collaboration in future. Sometimes long-serving CUP partners can also get weary of their collaboration leading to more ambivalence. There was only one CUP that was in the re-invigoration stage and this was one that is based on a historic model of working and seems to be entering a re-invigoration in terms of exploring the opportunities associated with further collaboration.

As for the future of CUP working in general, one interviewee, whose organisation used to be involved in a joint student placement scheme that all universities in the locality participated in, summarized the consensus of what enables CUPs to emerge quite well:

“I think you probably need good ongoing relationships, you need practical projects that both sides can benefit from. I think you need some resources to do some of that. Yes. It would be things like that, really. I guess, also if you have a positive operation and policy environment which encourages that sort of thing to happen, that's going to make it more likely. And then you need all the practical stuff underneath that.” (Interview with community partner)

Although this sounds quite simple and straightforward, unpicking the paragraph above would reveal all the different factors that interviewees across the sample identified as affecting CUP development including:

- The REF and how academic work is evaluated
- Universities as businesses – will they make a serious and lasting commitment to CUP working?
- Changing university culture (i.e. train administrators and others in CUP working; try to maintain staff with community links, rather than forcing them to move around)

- Training the next generation of CUP partners (relieving dependence on one individual)
- Champions are important for making the case for CUP working to funders, academics, university administrators, potential community partners and policymakers.
- Community demand and practical relevance
- Changing agendas and funding requirements requires adaptability whilst maintaining vision to navigate peaks and troughs in funding
- Community partner capacity and resources

Interestingly, although many acknowledged these factors, very few actually saw their CUP ending any time soon. The exceptions to this rule tended to be those CUPs where collaboration was itself only considered a time-limited phenomenon, rather than an ongoing feature. As is the case with much work that goes on at universities, third sector and statutory organisations, CUP working is often resourced by project funding and unless partners find ways of replacing this once it ends, the CUP ceases to exist, unless the underlying relationship has become strong enough to support a continuation in the absence of resources.

10.1. The Political Economy of CUPs

It is striking that most of the case studies were framed as relationships rather than projects. Therefore, the relationship stays intact and might facilitate access to different pots of money over time, as long as partners manage to stay in contact. One community partner recalls a period of uncertainty after a successful joint project:

“Community partner: I wasn’t disappointed. I was just thinking you know, it happens, you know, when you apply for funding and this was going to follow on from this exhibition and develop something in Sheffield and some of this fell through. But we still remained friends, we communicated, she was interested in what I was doing through the artwork.

Interviewer: So there was still mutual interest?

Community partner: Yeah, obviously, I was still producing my ... art, but yeah, after [this project], there was a gap and, you know, [my university partner] contacted me again and there was something technically wrong with the website and said, “It’s gone down, can you help us put it up?” and then she mentioned about other projects, but you gotta realise, these days it’s difficult to get funding for projects. So that was what was happening.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Therefore, in order to sustain the relationship, there needs to be the willingness to remain flexible and accept the fact that there will be peaks and troughs in activity. This is an attitude both a statutory and a university partner emphasize in the following quote, where they reflect about the future of the CUP:

“Statutory partner: I still think there’ll be contact, you know, but loose contact, just around this and that. But I don’t, it’s become a natural process it’s not needed any guidelines...I think ... if I need to talk to [my university partner] about anything that I think is relevant to what I’m doing I can phone her, she’ll be at the end of the phone call or email, and I would imagine if I asked to speak to [her], she has that same thing for me.

Academic partner: Yeah, definitely. I mean in terms of the future we’ve got the funding for another two years, but, you know, research is about that sort of environment where you don’t know what will happen next, what will be funded next, and it’s all relying on funding really. I would hope that sort of further research could be done in this area, and that [we] ...could continue working.... But it just depends on what happens really, I think we have to see what isn’t covered in this project, what other researchers are doing, if there’s a need to continue, you know, in this line sort of enquiries, and just go from there really. But certainly from this experience if I was to enter another research team who had partnership working with professionals, I would embrace it knowing that I’ve had a good experience so far.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

However, there was also a deliberate strategy of some CUPs to steer clear of funding altogether or keep dependency on funding minimal in order to ensure that the CUP is sustainable. This attitude is reflected in the following quote:

“I don’t think there’s much point in feeding the beast. A lot of partnerships go into feeding the beast, the whole infrastructure to support something, which is why when we set up the forum, when we set that up we wanted it to be as simple as possible”
(Interview with academic partner)

In terms of sustainability, some went as far as positioning the CUP as an antidote to financial insecurity. A statutory partner comments: “the problem we have is we’re going to have another huge round of cuts in 2015, the council is really going to suffer. But this work is almost probably the antidote to those cuts, when we say we’re combining our forces with people in other agencies. We put X thousands into this programme, into this team and look at the impact it has and the way that we’re able to leave our other resources, our partnership resources, with this group here and that group there, so you know, it’s a good argument in that sense.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Another community partner echoed this by explaining the advantages of the type of funding to which universities have access:

“But I do think that’s what I’m going to have to flag up as an advantage I think of working with the universities now. And I’ve seen that with other projects in the stream, they are more generously funded in terms of appreciating the full cost recovery; whereas the other pots of funding that the voluntary sector are able to get at the moment, are often either very risky or just very, very tight. Maybe £5000 project for work that is actually going to take the whole year. And that’s something the voluntary sector is struggling with as a whole, because we have to take these small pots of money, but actually it’s getting more and more difficult to deliver meaningful things” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

In other words, CUPs sometimes allow the VCS organisations involved in them to do more than they would normally be able to do without the CUP. Of course, the precondition for this is that community partners are actually properly paid for their part in the project.

As these examples show, CUPs sometimes deal with the uncertainty they are exposed to by emphasizing the underlying relationship and accepting uncertainty as part of the territory. At the same time, CUP working is seen by some as a way of pooling and stretching resources in difficult times.

10.1.1. Competition or Partnership?

Whilst there is some fear that economic uncertainty generally increases suspicion and mistrust and impedes collaboration, some of our interviewees see a trend to increasing willingness to work in partnership:

“Academic partner: It’s that much egos, I found from psychology there’s a lot of egos and a sense of competitiveness constantly. With [our CUP] there isn’t, it’s more about collaboration and actually people want to get together, it’s just sometimes you can’t because of different demands, but it’s not for lack of interest or will

Community partner: And it has changed. That really didn’t exist a few years ago again. Partly down to some individual people partly down to some sort of environmental changes, in people’s organisations threatened to lose their funding that really changes the way people want to collaborate then.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

An academic partner who has been involved in a CUP with a charity that focuses on delivery of training by service users and on student placements across the country for

many years, sees the role of CUPs as crucial to pioneer and sustain certain approaches in a climate where statutory services are increasingly under threat:

“I think charismatic organisations are very important in leading on things like this. And my feeling is it would be diluted and maybe dissipate if [the charity] didn’t take the lead, which would be a great shame, because the schemes themselves outside the university are highly vulnerable, when schemes have been NHS organisations, they’re highly vulnerable with funding being withdrawn and changes in I don’t know commissioning practices and so on and so forth. But the universities, I think in partnership with [the charity], have quite an important role in trying to sustain these types of initiatives. It’s interesting that the Health Service, while it ...kind of acknowledges the need to address the long terms issues of health and disease especially after strokes, they’re not very good at doing it. And [the schemes run by the CUP] are a very interesting way of addressing restrictions in participation and, for example, things like socialised relations. And without the kind of third sector university partnerships, I don’t think the NHS would have the stamina if you like to continue doing things like this. (Interview with academic partner)

There is thus reason to believe that economic uncertainty might not necessarily affect collaboration between academics and community partners as much as is often assumed. Certainly, from the point of view of risk taking and innovation, CUPs could be seen as essential for public services.

10.1.2. The Community Partner Context

Whilst acquisition of resources is certainly a driver for CUP working, lack of resources is also a factor that can inhibit CUP working. A number of people we interviewed in the course of the project talked about the tough situation that universities, third sector organisations and statutory bodies are going through. In light of the fact that it is unlikely for this situation to be resolved in the near future, it will be one of the factors that shape the likelihood of partnership working between universities and the community.

Many of the community partners we interviewed commented on stretched capacity, which has knock-on effects on the ability to do CUP work. The chief executive of a charity who is involved in CUP work wonders how she will be able to continue devoting time to this work, despite her realisation of its importance:

“I think it’s really important for our credibility I think it’s important to keep in the know, I think it’s important to think outside [our own] four walls, and I think it’s really important for [our service users] and for taking this forward. However resources are at all-time low, time is really precious and so I guess it depends a little bit on my continued creativity and commitment to it to keep it going. But you know, what

a facilitator if I could find a pot of money through it all.” (Interview with community partner)

Lack of capacity often means that community partner cannot get the best out of relationships they do have with university partners. For example, the director of a charity whose board has someone from the university comments on the fact that opportunities often cannot be realized due to lack of time:

“It’s like any partnership. You’ve got to have the time to spend to develop it and as you know within our sector time is precious, isn’t it? So, that time isn’t always available and I should imagine that’s also the case from the university’s point of view. You have the good intentions, but it’s whether anybody’s actually got time to sit down and develop it. And that’s what I said earlier on in the interview, you know, you need to have that commitment and that person driving it. And you can’t have that if you haven’t got time to do it. I’d say that’s probably the hugest barrier to developing the relationship further.” (Interview with community partner)

This seems to suggest that there are resource implications for developing CUPs in the first place and to realise existing CUPs’ full potential in the future. Yet, the implicit cost of building relationships that may facilitate CUP working is often not acknowledged. As one academic points out: “And more and more funders are looking for evidence of partnerships, and not just for this purpose of the grant but for pre-existing relationships, but they don’t really want to see a budget item that talks about the cost of developing a partnership.” (Interview with academic partner)

Community partners’ organisations are often at the frontline of economic hardship and while this means that there will be a continuing use for university resources to help with sustainability, there is also a challenge of engaging with partners in such a situation:

“But at the moment, it looks as though one of our organisations is closing and so it’s ... just a case of using the resources that we’ve got to carry on doing the work with people that need it, and of course the need is greater every day, because an example would be, we had ninety-one crisis interviews in the last six months..., last quarter there were only thirty, and this quarter, there’s sixty one. And it’s people coming on the doorstep needing food and fuel because they haven’t got any. So while that’s happening, we’re a food bank, ...they’re feeding around a thousand people every month, well that’s happening, that’s added stress.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One of the community partners we interviewed described her organisation’s re-allocation of resources away from the type of CUP working she is doing, thereby resulting in a watering down of the work:

“The kind of work that I did and that I have another two colleagues doing now in my place, which we call link work, which is the people who are out there, using this methodology, contacting people ... creating the spaces for this kind of work. [My organisation] have cut down from two link workers to one ... I’ve just had an argument with one of the managers there because I’m saying ‘if you want to ... carry on [this CUP work] for local people, why are you cutting down on the link work assignment bit?’, because ... you’ve got to have the expertise of the facilitators and the link workers out there in the communities. My view is that money is so hard to get in the voluntary sector [my organisation]... has been going since the 1980s and I honestly believe this is the worst crisis they have ever been in. I see them on the brink, and they’re a big organisation who’s had a big reputation for many years, but they’re on the brink, like a lot of organisations, they all seem to come back from the brink, so I’m hopeful. But what I see happening is that work like participation and engagement is being devaluedI mean you have to say that that agenda [that underpinned this work] ... was thrown on the scrap heap by the government we have now so the resources are not coming from there.” (Interview with community partner)

As the quote above highlights, organisations need to change the way they work and how they allocate resources. In combination with changing agendas and funding streams, this means that some CUP work might be under threat in future due to lack of resources. Whilst some of this risk can be averted by continuing flexibility, there is also the question to what extent CUPs have a mission that can be stretched beyond recognition of the need to adapt. This dilemma is voiced by an academic partner in the following quote: “in terms of sustainability, one of the questions that always comes into my head, are there other things around that can help to bolster what we are doing here without losing its character?” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

10.1.3. The university context

Although the situation of universities is different from that of VCS organisations working on the cusp of socio-economic crises, there is a consensus that in universities, too, business is not as usual at the moment. There is a sense that universities have reached

a watershed and are under pressure to re-evaluate their aims and modus operandi in order to carve their niche in an increasingly competitive market.¹⁹

“I think as the constraints on universities grow, I think partnership working may well be sacrificed, or could be sacrificed in the process. You know, the, it’s tough because our university is very solid financially, but even we’ve had to face redundancies, so academic staff have to pick up larger teaching loads, but they’re also required to do more research, and partnership working takes time and doesn’t always produce REFable outputs. And that’s going to be what they’re judged upon, and that’s what their career and promotion prospects depend upon.” (Interview with academic partner)

Another academic partner echoes a similar view:

“I don’t think it’ll necessarily remain like this, that universities have this sort of drive to reach out and work with the community, I think it does have benefits for the universities but as the funding agenda is changing, they may have to go after much more business-like opportunities, or simply going after students that are in the right position rather than local communities and areas where actually people don’t have a history of going to university.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One academic partner actually saw a demise of partnership work, which is mainly caused by her own CUP’s precarious situation and linkage to a government agenda that no longer exists in the same form: “I mean I am hoping that we will continue. ... the last government I suppose liked people that were doing outward facing activities and community based activities you know our sort of thing was more popular but I think since the university has become a business they’re really only keen on stuff which is income generating.” (Interview with academic partner)

One interview conducted by Cupp in Brighton reflects a more positive and alternative view, in which universities provide an independent open space that neither the state nor the third sector finds possible to provide anymore: “How can university fulfill a role ... as a catalyst and space for societal innovation and change? Arguably, universities/higher education working with the public have a primary and pivotal role to play ... in this

¹⁹ **An Avalanche is Coming**, (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2013), looks at the challenges to the University sector globally. It suggests that the next 50 years could be a golden age for higher education but only if change is handled carefully.

regard.. in an era when government and NGOs are finding it harder to do this ... where is the independent/open space?” (Future of Cupp interviews)

Although among our interviewees there was a strong sense of universities increasingly operating as businesses and in many cases, this was seen as a factor that cast doubt over their commitment to true partnership work, CUP working was also seen as something that does make a lot of business sense and helps universities to stay competitive. This view was based on the belief that CUP working might in future attract new resources as a result of mounting pressures on universities to make research more relevant to society’s needs.

One example for a changing climate is the Research Excellence Framework (REF), which was referred to by most academic partners. Many saw this as one of the drivers for an increased salience of CUPs, as well as inaugurating a change in how community partners are perceived. One university partner sees the REF as “way into these conversations about trying to recognise relationships that exist and from a civil society point of view.” (Interview with university partner) Some of the CUPs in our study had been case studies for the REF and this was seen as something that contributed to their credibility and sustainability.

Despite the current interest in public engagement, we have already noted that with some of our academic participants there is a profound sense of CUP work as swimming against the tide in universities. However, there were others who expressed a hope that something has changed substantively over the past couple of years, enabling a brighter future for CUP working:

“I think probably it’s more difficult now, in some ways, in some of the new universities to maintain this agenda because they’re not the big winners in the research evaluation they haven’t got heaps of money that they can cushion other kinds of activities so I think in some ways it’s more difficult for them now, but the public engagement agenda it’s when that started really taking off it was like the doors we were pushing against for twenty, thirty years were now open. I now have an agenda that I can talk to our Dean about and say this is why we must do this kind of work.” (Interview with academic partner)

Both academics and community partners in our sample were extremely wary of the need for resources to develop meaningful CUP working that actually delivers benefits to both partners and to the wider community. This need for capacity-building at the development stage is something that funders still need to understand fully.

10.1.4. Relevance and legitimacy

A source of optimism that CUP working will continue into the future is the ongoing evidence of demand for the work the CUP produces. There were a number of CUPs in

the sample which filled a knowledge gap, engaged with a socially highly relevant topic or were specifically based on demand from community partners. By virtue of working with community partners, academics were able to come up with research foci that were relevant for practitioners and communities.

Partners involved in a CUP around ageing research reflect on this in the following passage:

“University partner: Universities always going to want to do high quality research around [this subject]. ... There’s always going to be questions. And part of the reason there will be questions is there’s always going to be pressures on these services, there’s always going to be questions that need addressing. So I don’t see those things changing. You’re always providing services in those areas, so I don’t think the nature of the bodies are such that they’re going to be going in different directions. The councils are there to do specific roles which it’s not like a private company, which, you know, you lose market shares in computers, so you go into something else. This is stability in terms of what we’re doing

Community partner: I think stability; I think you’re absolutely right about stability.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

An academic who is involved in a research-based CUP about fostering talks about how the partnership and the access to affected parties it ensures can make any research more relevant:

“The idea is that we come along to these events and say firstly here is the research we’re doing and if we’ve got any finding from it, does that fit in with your experience of fostering and secondly to ask what are the issues for you in foster care at the minute, you think research is needed on. Because it may be sometimes that it’s just that there is research out there but it’s not getting to the people who need it. Which is why we do these reviews that we write and we make them very accessible but sometimes it’s that actually there hasn’t been research on this thing and then if we can identify that gap and if we’ve got time in our schedules then you know we can get the funding for some of them, we can do that project.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Co-production was perceived as a key way of ensuring that research is relevant in future. One academic describes how her collaboration with a statutory partner ensures this relevance to communities: “So, we got an opportunity to get the money, but we didn’t know what it was going to be all about, so what [my community partner] does, it’s really fantastic, this. Cause every time we get an opportunity to bid for money, rather than us thinking of it, he says, well let’s go and sit with a group of young people.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

It seems that one of the preconditions for CUPs to continue in future is a degree of flexibility on the part of academics, which in turn would presuppose a change in university culture, where typically academics are encouraged to be highly specialised, with an inherent lack of flexibility to be able to work on research topics that might be of interest. As the following dialogue shows, CUP research will only ever be feasible if there is a practical use, but there has to be a certain degree of flexibility on both sides:

“Academic partner: So I mean, future projects will depend on whether it’s something that you all want to work on.

Interviewer: is that the main factor that will influence whether the relationship continues.

Statutory partner: In a way, I suppose it has to be the main factor because it’s all about people’s time isn’t it, and if you can commit your time to something that is useful, obviously because that’s a benefit. But will you commit your time to something that doesn’t have the same relevance, unlikely, isn’t it? I mean I do think that because we are in the locality and it’s easy to work within that, it’s going to make it easier anyway. ... I don’t see any reason why not but you do have to prioritise don’t you?

Academic partner: Yes. And I think we do try and build that into our kind of forthcoming research programme which you’re probably going to move a little more into work with the young people themselves... Because you don’t want them to become wary of being contacted about the same thing.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Working with community partners can sometimes reveal a veritable research bonanza in the form of identifying an under-researched topic, as described in the quote from a community partner below:

“I think before we met, while you were still on leave, there was a definite sense amongst practitioners, including the police, that we needed to have something as a hub for research. there was a real sense from above that somebody needs to corral all these researchers, and somehow make them do the research we want them to do, and to share their findings all in the same place so we can find them all. Because it was a real effort to keep on top of new complications, because there was no place for it, and there wasn’t a dedicated time....Almost every different discipline you can imagine has some relevance to [our subject] somehow, and keeping on top of it, understanding it all was not only impossible for one person to do, or for any organisation to do. So there was already a will coming from the Strategic Oversight Group that somebody has to do something about research. They didn’t say it must be a centre at the university, but it was, go away and think of something.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

An academic who is involved in a CUP that is a social enterprise comments on the need to be flexible so as to produce something in future that will be useful in a practical context: “I’m very responsive, if people find what I do useful, I’ll carry on doing it. I’m happy to do something different, it’s ...more about the practical approaches that people find helpful.” (Interview with academic partner)

Her community partner also talks about the demand from communities as a source of legitimacy. Whilst demand itself often is dependent on certain political agendas, this person highlights that the underlying issues will still be the same:

“People ask us for training consultancy all the time. You know, we don’t generate that; that comes to us. So people are curious about resilience, but what if in five years’ time, resilience is no longer the buzz word? People go down some other route, which is highly likely. You know, you have a shelf life. ... So what happens when it’s not fashionable? So even though we set it out ten years ago when it was not [fashionable], you know, will we just change the language because the issue around supporting the most disadvantaged children and young people will still be there. I have no doubt about that.” (Interview with community partner)

A key factor that influences whether CUPs will stay important in the future is their ability to address real-life issues and produce knowledge and evidence that there is a demand for. Again, co-production was seen as the key mechanism that will ensure continued relevance to practical concerns. Along with that goes a need to be somewhat flexible in order to be able to adapt to changing needs.

10.2. Champions

The future of CUP working also crucially depends on the continuing presence of individuals who champion this type of work and who are adept at pitching CUP work using language that those who make funding decisions can relate to, as well as getting the support of a broad range of staff.

One academic partner describes his continuing efforts to keep the CUP he leads in the form of a research centre on the university agenda:

“Sometimes I’ve got to remind people that (pause) they’re actually in this [CUP], and ... that we all benefit from that because that embodies their issue. The centre transcends individuals and the centre should be the thing that keeps it together that when the individuals aren’t on stage anymore, and I think that’s a key thing, so I really. My idea would be for the Centre to be even more prominent as a centre, not necessarily associated with individual people but that it exists as a working relationship ... Sometimes you just got to remind people of that in a gentle way, not fighting against it, but you know, things are done and could easily be linked to, just

related to the centre and not taking credit from whoever has done the research, just to keep it there in the background at the end of the day, because that's what keeps the university and the museum together in a formal sense." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

As we have seen above, engaged academics and community partners who are champions of CUPs are trying to see beyond their own involvement and lay the foundations for others carrying on this type of work in future. One academic who is very committed to CUP working describes her strategies: "So most of my PhD students have been people... who got boundary identities or course practice or parenting or, and so they are now developing their own ways of doing this." (Interview with academic partner)

For community partners, there is also an issue with passing on expertise in this area of work to maintain CUPs in future. As the chief executive of an organisation whose involvement in a CUP has been very beneficial says: "I think [our organisation] now has a lot of confidence to enter into those processes with big or little pots of funding. ... So for [us] I think we're in a really good place, having been through the process. I think there's a bigger question for academic organisations and voluntary sector organisations who maybe haven't explored that before, and how you build those organisations up to be able to engage." (Interview with community partners)

Two partners who are involved in a CUP that grew from the grassroots spoke about the difficulties involved in trying to expand CUP work beyond the immediate champions. This reveals that the issues are really quite similar in the university and in the community:

“Academic partner: We must find a way to make sure that it doesn't depend on me personally. Because I'm very old, I've been retired already for five years and I can't go on forever..., so it needs to be more secure, more staff members involved at this end. The second thing is that's necessary for other things as well, because it needs to be fully embedded in the way all the teaching and research goes on.

Community partner: It's similar, isn't it really? To ensure that it's ... not dependent on me. We are trying to bring in other members of [the organisation] on. We've got one person who's very active, very actively involved. But we could do with a couple more really. But it's not straightforward because of course [they] want to be doing their activism or their campaigning on the issues, you know. Even if they can recognise the value of the classroom they don't necessarily want to be spending too long participating in courses here or coming and taking part in lectures or panels at the university or coming to meetings in the tea room with other staff, it's not going to be their main focus." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

This is only part of the story, though. The other part is that universities will have to change the way they are working in order to enable CUP working to be embedded in future. This includes creating a structure that incentivizes CUP working and its outputs, rather than dismissing it as inferior science. It also means training administrators and others in public engagement and then retaining the knowledge at the institution. As one academic pointed out: “it might mean you have a different strategy for recruiting your middle managers and you ask for different things from your middle managers and different abilities.” (Interview with academic partners)

Strengthening the impact element of the way universities are evaluated, i.e. the REF, will drive such changes in CUPs, because it will make certain activities more worthwhile:

“With these big organisations of course it has to be in their interests to change. They have to see something as being worthwhile and it may be because the value placed on the impact of research, and because often community partnerships do have an impact. It may be small scale it may be larger scale because there are often projects that are tackling very real issues and there’s ways in which what the research finds out or does, that can be used then these can be quite valuable projects, if the universities realise that then they’ll work out ways to make those things happen more easily and the staff to be encouraged to do that kind of work.” (Interview with academic partner)

However, the nature of how impact is defined and documented matters as well:

Interviewer: So do you think that in order for this type of work to get more recognition there need to be changes about how the academic work is evaluated?

Academic partner: I think so, and I do think about, I think that it would be really good to see a different approach to the REF that perhaps involved partners. And you know, I mean it’s all about academics’ perspectives on that impact, it’s not about, we talk about our partnerships and how those partnerships have led to impact, but there is no opportunity for partners to contribute to that process, or there is opportunity, but it’s limited, very limited. (Interview with academic partner)

Last but not least there has to be a genuine commitment through the ranks of the university to maintain CUP working. At the time of writing there was a strong trend of high-level commitment to the public engagement agenda, but much of this did not trickle down to the academic staff. One veteran of CUP working put this as a comparison between American universities and those in the UK:

Academic partner: You read any of the stuff around engaging universities in America it’s when you’ve got a ...president who

comes in and says this is what this university is going to be about and then... is able to either get the help and whatever it takes to change the systems and to take everyone with them.

Interviewer: yeah, because even in small organisations, you know I see this in the voluntary sector that sometimes maybe the Chief Officer has bought into something but then the staff don't know anything about it!

Academic partner: Yeah, you've got to be able to take the people who are going to deliver it. And that's a question of leadership, it's not a question of 'oh those dreadful people won't do it' So ... [if] the middle management won't do things, well, whose job is it to make them or to enable them or to support them or whatever?"
(Interview with academic partner)

For CUP working to continue and become part of the way universities and communities work, the role of champions is indispensable. Those who are part of CUPs play an important role as champions by communicating its benefits in a language that important influencers and stakeholders understand, as well as by highlighting the institutional structures and processes that need to change in order to support those involved in CUPs. Training their peers and sharing their learning is part of this process and so is implementing the high-level rhetoric about public engagement across the entire university.

10.3. Ideal Scenarios

We asked participants about their ideal scenarios with regard to future relationships between universities and communities. These ideal scenarios were usually about the need to blur boundaries between the two sides of CUPs, which often translated into a desire to see more sharing of physical resources such as meeting rooms, libraries, museums, etc.

An academic who is involved in a community of practice about mental health thinks that making university space more readily available could encourage more CUP initiatives: "if there was a way that [community partners], at the end of that meeting, could go away and reflect on it, and then maybe say, look, I just need a room at the university and a bit of funding to bring my colleagues in for a session which isn't CPD but it is the chance to think about this actually." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

One community partner sees sharing of assets as a powerful trend driven by austerity and localism:

"Um, it's interesting. At the moment we are separate organisations that work together. Now ... in other geographical areas that the distinction between university and local authority started to merge in

terms of, say for example, this is particularly happening on the library side, in Worcester the university and the public library come together as a shared resource in one building. ... [in another place] a couple of their museums are actually part of the university....so perhaps ... in the future, it's more about shared working. One of the things that is happening nationally now is rather than saying that certain budgets [for public service delivery] go to certain organisations, is that there's more coming together in that certain budgets go for certain purposes and how that's delivered is entirely up to those partners that are involved." (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Clearly, there are challenges associated with a scenario of sharing university space and resources, but it does give a flavor of the fact that CUP working is set in an overall context where collaboration is the norm, rather than the exception.

A related ideal future scenario that came across in the interviews was a desire to see more mainstreaming of CUP working. Our participants seemed to have an appetite for more strategic and embedded approaches to CUP working. Rather than taking place in pockets, by virtue of academic entrepreneurialism, as is often the case now, in this envisaged scenario, CUP working would be expected to happen across universities and be seen as normal. As one academic partner put it:

"Well, I guess the ideal environment is where a lot of this sort of bureaucracy and red tape is cut ... it would be wonderful if we could just go out and meet with the community partners, and develop our own internal agreement without having to conform to the university's agreement. But that isn't going to happen, that can't happen so I suppose the ideal environment is where you've got the university where this is a norm, where it's accepted that you're going to be doing a project in partnership with community organisations therefore it's all levels whether it's people making claims for honorary and community partner being paid and agreements and all those sort of things are just expected and are the norm." (Interview with academic partner)

Another academic notes that public engagement, whilst ideally being in every university staff's job description, still has to be appropriate to the nature of people's work instead of being a blanket requirement: "Well, I would say that all students have to engage in a community oriented project. All staff have to, as part of their job description, have public engagement I think in a broad sense ... not necessarily working with the community because some people you wouldn't want let loose on community involvement in a

hundred years. So then that would have a whole staff development and curriculum development structure underpinning all of that.” (Interview with academic partner)

As far as student placements are concerned, there are already some academic disciplines where these are seen as normal, however, these are usually those with a more practical and professional implication, i.e. law, criminal justice, health and social care, teaching etc. In the ideal scenario that participants envisaged, the idea of placements would be extended to other, disciplines where the professional link is less obvious.

As far as research is concerned in ideal scenarios, a more strategic approach in future would mean that the community has a stronger voice in shaping the research agenda, informing research design and delivery. If these scenarios actually came true, there would be immense resource implications. In the worst-case scenario the community would all of a sudden be inundated in requests for joint research, hosting placements, being on steering groups, etc. In a best-case scenario, capacity for community partners to engage with these developments would be carefully built in advance and there would be a dialogue about identifying ways of working would be most useful for community partners and their outcomes. As one community partner put it: “The idea would be if third sector organisations eventually had it in their budgets to pay for an intern... I mean you can see that it’s something that might happen in the future, but you still need to make a run at it to get the idea into [community partners’] heads.” (Joint interview with CUP partners)

Whilst many aspects of these scenarios involved blurring boundaries between university and community one community partner pointed out that , boundaries are quite important, as it is only by virtue of being in separate realms, with all the concomitant differences, that partners can really form a whole that is bigger than the parts: “I think you’d have a more fluid boundary between university and community, but I think we’ve got that quite a bit, I wouldn’t want total immersion otherwise what’s the point of having anything different. It is a tension that will always be there.” (Interview with community partner)

Key Messages:

CUP working that involves pooling resources is seen as one way of navigating through difficult economic times that it is believed will continue in the near future

Community partners’ capacity is increasingly stretched, as they are trying to address more community needs with fewer resources. This means they have less capacity to work in CUPs unless this collaboration generates resources.

Universities are caught between increasing pressure to act as businesses and the more altruistic notion of CUP working for mutual benefit.

Sustainability of CUPs in future depends on the extent to which they can address relevant issues. This requires some flexibility on both sides and good relationships that can weather peaks and troughs in activity.

CUP work needs champions beyond those immediately involved in CUP.

CUP working is rarely fully embedded in university settings in the UK. Whilst the impact agenda of the REF may change this situation, it still privileges traditional academic outputs over those often produced by CUPs.

Ideal views of the future would see CUP working being set in an overall social context where collaboration is the norm, rather than the exception.

Changes in future were mainly seen as needed in universities, where an ideal scenario would be that CUP working was seen as normal and was embedded across the institution, leading to universities involving communities in shaping research agendas and design.

University leaders need to implement the high-level rhetoric about public engagement across the entire university by supporting all staff accordingly.

Blurring of physical boundaries between universities and communities involving sharing spaces and resources were seen as desirable, but boundaries are also important to maintain complementary strengths.

14. Conclusion and Recommendations

CUP working between universities and local statutory or VCS agencies is a recent and growing expression of an overall trend towards partnership working. Whereas universities already have tried and tested systems of collaborating with for-profit businesses and industry, the situation with regard to collaborations with not-for-profit organisations and communities is still less developed. However, since 2006, when the Higher Education Funding Council for England included the desirability of partnerships with statutory and voluntary players in its strategic plan, there has been a notable drive towards public engagement and CUP working. Universities are somewhat caught between responding to this agenda of becoming more responsive to communities and increasing pressure to perform as businesses and deliver other agendas linked to teaching and research.

Not least as a result of the economic downturn, the financial bottom-line has also become more important to community partner organisations, which in turn affects their ability to engage in partnership working. Community partners' capacity is increasingly stretched, as they are trying to address more community needs with fewer resources. This means they have less capacity to work in CUPs unless this collaboration generates resources.

CUP working usually happens on top of academics' and community partners' day-to-day duties. Therefore, time and capacity constraints present a major obstacle to CUPs that are not funded in their own right. Funding regimes are not conducive to promoting fair and inclusive practices of CUP working due to short lead-in times and short-term funding horizons.

Despite the above, this study has shown that there is a plethora of CUP work going on, both funded and unfunded. Moreover, CUPs themselves were often cast as a resilient move for a VCS organisation, for example by boosting community partner organisations' ability to access resources for service delivery and by securing the support of academics to advocate on behalf of the community. Among statutory participants in our study, CUP working was seen as one way of navigating through difficult economic times by pooling resources.

However, a perceived need for change was also articulated by both academics and community partners, in order to enable CUP working and unlock its full potential. Inflexible bureaucratic structures in universities and lack of research-mindedness in community partner organisations are common obstacles to CUP working. However, those interviewed for the study mainly saw changes as needed in future in universities, where an ideal future scenario would be that CUP working was seen as normal and was embedded across the institution, leading to universities involving communities in shaping research agendas and design.

At this point in time CUP working is rarely fully embedded in university settings in the UK. In a university context, individual academic leadership in CUP working often compensates for lack of organisational support and buy-in. Although there are examples

of institutional leadership among the universities in this study, it is often challenging to translate high-level commitment into practical realities at an operational level.

In this context, personal relations that have a chance to develop over time are key for successful CUPs, because they enable trust to be built, power dynamics to be acknowledged and honest communication about respective organisational constraints, thus minimising the disruptive potential of obstacles that might occur. Overcoming difficulties together forges trust and builds partnership.

Interestingly, in our sample there seemed to be an association between trust and the ability to appreciate one's partner in CUP working on a more personal level. There also seemed a decided disregard of instrumentalising CUPs. Instead of mutual instrumental gain, shared passion and motivation were emphasized. Of course, good CUPs are always underpinned by mutual interests and benefits, but where there is a more personal relationship, there appears to be more trust.

The findings of this study suggest that successful CUPs have a set of characteristics that include the following:

- Partners accept that partnership working is an ongoing learning experience.
- Partners manage to reframe differences into an opportunity, rather than an obstacle.
- Partners make an effort to become aware of power dynamics underlying their CUP and take practical steps to address these.
- Partners pay attention to the social aspect of the CUP, for example incorporate opportunities to interact socially into the activities of the CUP. This recognizes the importance of those involved in CUPs getting on at a personal level in order to perform their roles successfully.
- Partners play to each other's strengths and acknowledge that equity and fairness in CUPs are compatible with different levels of involvement by different partners and, if applicable, varying levels of involvement over the course of a CUP.
- Partners choose a level of formality appropriate to their mission.

Adhering to principles of co-production was seen as the gold standard of CUP working and one of the criteria that CUP partners referred to in order to set their own CUP apart from those of competitors. Although challenges remained in implementing co-production in practice, there was a recognition that co-production has benefits, such as:

- Ensuring that CUPs have mutual benefit
- Enhancing the impact and quality of research

- Generating appropriate and ethically sensitive research approaches
- Enabling practice-relevant outputs
- Securing buy-in and ownership by both partners and their respective stakeholders (i.e. organisation, service users, wider community)

The extent to which CUPs are formalized varies widely. Although formalisation and/or institutionalisation can enhance legitimacy and act as a mechanism to draw resources into the CUP, study participants pointed out that due to the unpredictable nature of CUP working it is often best to gradually build the relationship by generating some quick wins and testing approaches on the way rather becoming a specified formal cross-organisational partnership, or institutional structure at the start of a CUP. Many of the community partners in our study preferred informal approaches despite the fact that they were also wary of the possibility that academics might exploit them.

As this report has set out, CUPs certainly produce benefits at the individual and institutional level. Individual partners benefit professionally and personally from CUP working by getting access to their respective skills sets. Community partner organisations and universities have improved their ability to acquire resources through CUPs, saw reputational benefits and had access to wider networks with the associated new opportunities. CUP work also enabled both partners to offer more opportunities and better-quality services to students and service users.

The only area where there was no strong evidence for the benefit of CUP working in our sample was their impact on the community-at-large, although there was some indication that, as long as CUPs adhere to an ethos of co-production and mutual benefit, there is a chance that the community at large may benefit to varying degrees. This mirrors the difficulties with trying to evidence impact at this level in the REF Impact studies. Nevertheless, expectations have to be kept realistic and take into account the size and remit of the CUP. An area for which there was some evidence in the study of impacts on the wider community was the ability of CUP working to generate outputs that help communities to re-discover their history and combat stigmatisation and stereotyping.

In light of these benefits it would be desirable to inspire more people to champion the cause of CUP working. Although there were academics who are trying to pass on their expertise to future champions, in many cases, the expertise in CUP working resides in the individuals who are directly involved. Bodies such as CCPH and NCCPE are doing their bit to ensure that there is a documented legacy to this way of working, and that appropriate advice is given to new recruits.

However, the fact still remains that at present, partners in CUPs are not often given the time to reflect on their experiences. Therefore, a crucial precondition to enable embedding and sharing learning about how to make these partnerships work is not in place. In addition, both sides currently lack incentives to share their learning more widely: engaged academics often do not feel empowered enough by their organisation to share learning and community partners are not adequately resourced to do so.

There is also a question to what extent CUP working can ever become a habitual way of working across sectors, unless it is adequately resourced across the board. Student placements, a readily recognized and common form of CUP, are an example for this. Our study showed that by hosting student placements community partner organisations become quite an important element of students' education, but are not always rewarded or recognized for this service. If public engagement principles were embedded in curricula across universities, leading to a high demand for student placements, it is not difficult to imagine that mechanisms would have to be found that resource this community contribution adequately, whilst preventing community partner organisations from being over-run by demand.

Last but not least, the blurring of boundaries between universities and communities are desirable especially in terms of sharing spaces and resources, but boundaries are also important to maintain complementary strengths in the future.

In light of the findings above and the key messages at the end of each chapter, we suggest the following recommendations.

For Community University Partnerships

Establish expectations at the outset as much as possible whilst staying open for readjustments and continuous learning. Be aware of how some funding sources restrict your ability to adjust over time. In some cases it might be better to stay as independent as possible from funding.

Check that funding allows for full cost recovery of each partners' involvement.

Make your assumptions explicit to build awareness of mutual constraints that might disrupt joint working.

Different cultures, skills sets and ways of working are what makes CUPs tick, so try to see them as assets rather than obstacles.

Consider the potential for small pieces of joint work to build trust and test approaches prior to more formal arrangements that establish the CUP within institutions.

Allow for the involvement of partners at different levels of intensity and regularity.

Be aware of the historical context of CUP working and issues such as research fatigue and the economic context (i.e. capacity constraints)

Conceptualising CUPs on an ongoing basis, rather than as one-off transactions, makes sense in terms of being able to build on the investment partners have made into the relationship.

The impact of CUPs is a relatively under-researched subject, particularly with community partners leading the research. Consider co-producing joint articles and

reports about the impact of the CUP to give it a separate profile, and ensure that community partners lead this, or are appropriately included.

Make reflective time to embed learning with and from each other for the purpose of the partnership itself and to be able to share this with others in the field.

Ensure that the knowledge of CUP working does not only reside in individual partners themselves; otherwise your CUP's success will be dependent on this one individual.

For Universities

Consider the benefits universities stand to accrue as a result of their CUP working.

Be aware of the assets community partners bring to the table, rather than assuming that they are the only ones who benefit from CUP working.

Re-evaluate the value of student placements for the students, the university and VCS organisations respectively in order to recognise their contributions appropriately.

Consider investment in CUP working as a business case and an opportunity to stay competitive.

University leaders need to implement the high-level rhetoric about public engagement across the entire university by supporting all staff accordingly.

Encourage the sharing of learning in CUP work across the institution, across disciplines and across the hierarchy.

Consider how CUP actions provide evidence of research impact and how impact is documented for the purposes of the REF in order to incentivise co-production through CUPs.

For Funders

Incorporate an evaluation/reflection component into the funding for CUP work.

Acknowledge the unpredictability and evolutionary nature of CUP working in funding regimes, rather than making funding regimes overly prescriptive.

Recognise the resource implications for developing CUPs in the first place and allow funded time for this, particularly for community partners as bid development is often not included as part of their core role.

For Community Partners

Networking is usually the best approach to find university partners for CUP working.

Be clear about how the CUP fits into the rest of your work and what it contributes to your mission. With academics, the link to their work is often clearer and therefore the risk is not that high, but for community partners, whose resources are much more

limited and mainly dedicated to service delivery, the risk of not linking the CUP to the core mission can be considerable.

Ensure that you have the support and buy-in of your organisation to ensure that the CUP work can actually be of benefit to the organisation in a broader sense.

Allocate capacity towards using the findings of any CUP research.

Manage expectations of stakeholders as to the potential impact of the CUP on the wider community.

Be conscious of the value of assets that you bring to the table. These may be in the form of contacts, reputation and expertise, among other things.

When hosting student placements organisations often become collaborators in students' educational journey but do not host student placements simply in the expectation of gaining access to expertise. Expect to support the student.

In CUPs partners are from organisations with radically different deliverables. It is therefore highly important to think about how CUPs can benefit from these differences rather than viewing them as a hindrance.

Join the UKCPN and make yourself aware of their resources so that you can get advice and support with your partnership from other community partners

For Academic Partners

Networking is usually the best approach to find community partners for CUP working. Voluntary sector development agencies are a good first point of contact.

Be clear about how the CUP fits into the rest of your work. Be aware that as an academic, the link to your work may be clearer than for the community partner. Therefore for community partners, whose resources are much more limited and mainly dedicated to service delivery, the risk of CUP work can be considerable.

A common strategy to deal with adversity from one's institutional setting is to "fly under the radar." This might not be the most beneficial way of addressing the situation. Instead, try to pitch your CUP work in a language that is understood by managers to increase legitimacy and recognition for CUP working. There was experience amongst people in the study that an effort of making people understand CUP work is worthwhile.

Be aware of the historical context of CUP working and issues such as research fatigue and the economic context (i.e. capacity constraints).

Manage expectations of partners and stakeholders as to the limited potential impact of the CUP on the wider community.

In order for CUP research to be feasible, there needs to be a practical use for it. This often requires some flexibility on the part of academics, which in turn would presuppose

a slight change in a university culture, where typically academics are encouraged to be highly specialised, with an inherent lack of flexibility on research topics that might be of interest.

Ensure that you familiarize yourself with the UKCPN and the advice and support it gives to community partners.

Engage with other academics who have a history of working in community university partnership and find a mentor who you trust.

Draw on the expertise of bodies such as NCCPE and CCPH as they have established websites replete with advice and run regular conferences where you will pick up tips on how best to work with community partners

Appendix A

Interview Questions for University of Brighton and Community Partner research into the social, historical, cultural and democratic context of civic engagement

The purpose of the research is to:

- Examine the key features of Community University Partnerships (CUPs) Identify the degree to which they have developed into Communities of Practice (COP).
- Identify how the partners learn from each other in CUPs.
- Critically explore the extent to which universities are hostile or enabling working environments for CUP working.
- Examine partner views on the future of CUPs and understand the processes that make CUPs resilient in the longer term.

This conversation will cover four areas, the history of the specific partnership we are discussing, the experience of working together, the resilient processes and outcomes of the partnership and the future of partnership working.

Introductory questions

For the recording, could you please say your name and your affiliation with regard to this interview (e.g. community partner, university administration, researcher, lecturer, student, multiple roles etc)?

We will be discussing specifically your partnership with _____. But first, could you give me a sense of your general experience of community and universities working together? Is the partnership we are about to discuss a one-off, the beginning of a journey, or part of a portfolio of projects, or something else?

The history of the partnership

Let's move to talking about your work in partnership with _____. How would you describe your/your organisation's relationship with _____?

Can you tell me a little bit about the history of the partnership? How did _____ and you end up working with each other? When did it start?

How easy was initiating the partnership? Can you recall any obstacles that had to be overcome and how you overcame them?

Did you use any existing formal partnership models to define your partnership?

Questions to prompt further discussion

How was the relationship initiated? i.e. who approached whom? How and where did you first meet? Was there anybody else involved?

How did you/your organisation decide to get involved in a partnership with _____? What were your main reasons for getting involved?

Where did the idea for the piece of work originate? In other words, did the university/the community partner approach you with an idea or did you come up with that idea? Did the final idea look different and why?

The daily reality of partnership working

Let's explore the daily reality of partnership working a bit now. When it came to actually doing the work on the ground and working in partnership with _____, what happened? (Probe here. Try to get them to actually articulate some precise details. Who? What? Why?)

How would you describe your overall experience of working in partnership with _____? Strengths and weaknesses, what worked, what didn't?

How do you see your own personal role in the partnership? (Keeping it on track, resolving issues, promoting values, etc.)

How did your organisation support your partnership work with _____?

Which do you see as the key decisions that ended up determining the nature and quality of the partnership? This could be decisions that enabled other positive or negative things to happen, which would not have happened in the absence of that decision.

Were there any major turning points in your work together? These are points at which something happened that altered the course of your partnership, for better or worse.

Questions to prompt further discussions

Was what happened then what you had expected/envisaged/hoped for? Why/why not?

How was the partnership administered, funded and managed? Who were the lead individuals and why did they have that role?

What helped and what hindered partnership working? Which obstacles did you have to overcome and how did you overcome them?

Can you describe a moment when you encountered a major difficulty, which could have spelled the end of the partnership? Do you remember how you overcame this difficulty?

How do/did you resolve tensions (actual techniques)?

How much influence do you have over daily work for the partnership?

So what?

What happened as a result of this partnership? What have you or haven't you gained from the partnership? What difference has it made for you and/or your stakeholders?

Could you have achieved the same outcome by yourself?

Which skills/expertise did you/your partner bring to the partnership?

Do you think that you and your partner learned from each other as a result of the partnership? How was this learning shared with others outside the immediate partnership? What were the key issues on which the learning focused? Why do you feel these were the key learning issues?

How has your relationship with _____ changed as a result of working together?

Would you do it again and/or recommend this way of working to others? Why? What advice would you give them, based on your experience?

Questions to prompt further discussion

Has the fact that you work(ed) with _____ changed anything in your organisation with regard to:

- Public image/trust of your beneficiaries in you as an organisation
- Ability to innovate
- Access to resources (financial, in-kind, human, social capital)
- Ability to influence policy
- Ability to make real changes for and alongside people in challenging contexts
- Sustainability
- Ability to work in partnership

What have you learned as a result of the partnership? Did you expect to learn this? Were there any issues which you expected to learn more about?

Has the partnership created anything that is of ongoing benefit or holds future potential? What difference, if any, has your partnership with _____ made, to whom?

The future of the partnership

Is the partnership you have with _____ time-limited? How do you see its future?

What were the key factors ensuring the partnership has continued as long as it has?

What will determine the continuation of the partnership in the future? What factors will shape the direction it takes?

I am going to read you a definition of resilience. “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging and threatening circumstances.” (Masten et al., 1990) How does your partnership relate to this definition?

Which strategies would you recommend to others to make their partnerships resilient?

How could your experience in community-university partnership working have been improved?

Questions to prompt further discussion

If you woke up tomorrow and found yourself in an ideal environment for community and university co-working, what practical things would you be doing?

What limits you from moving towards this ideal situation?

Given the ideal situation might not occur could you imagine what are the key factors likely to shape the future resilience of your partnership?

Appendix B

Memory Story Instructions

The task is to write a short experience story about *A moment when I felt I really learned something as a result of the community-university partnership I'm (I was) involved with.*

By "learning" we mean anything that you learned, positive or negative, about a topic or about the partnership itself, about yourself, about others, etc.

Take 5 minutes to think about your topic.

Then take 15 minutes to write the story.

Basic principles:

- Please don't mention names, including your own.
- Write the story in the first person (i.e. I went, I wrote)
- Just write what comes to mind, without concern for writing style, typos, etc.
- Try to write as if you were in the situation you are describing.
- The less polished the stories are, the better.

Appendix C

Study of Community University Partnerships Needs Participants

Increasingly, universities are looking for partners outside of academia. GMCVO is working in partnership with the University of Brighton to find out how these types of partnerships work, how they generate mutual learning and what makes them resilient. For our study we are looking for inspiring examples of such work that:

- Are partnerships/collaborations between a university or an academic affiliated with a university and a voluntary organisation, a local authority or members from the wider community.
 - Include a mechanism by which people from both sides share knowledge and ideas (i.e. this could be a learning network, one-off or occasional knowledge sharing event – the important point is that this should be broader than just a one-on-one relationship, drawing in peers of each of the partners).
 - Have been operating for at least 6 months and are either still in progress or have concluded.
 - Go beyond a simple one-off transaction.

Appendix D

Drivers and Constraints for CUP Working

	Higher Education		Third Sector	
	Universities	Individual Academics	Organisations	Individual Staff
Drivers	Pressure from funders (impact agenda), social responsibility, competition, widening participation, employability, student experience	Pressure from institution, individual interest and passion, access to research participants, potential for relevant and higher quality research	Access to new resources, help with achieving mission, benefits for organisational reputation and credibility, service delivery and service users; influencing research agenda; staff development	Personal and professional development, individual interest and passion
Constraints	Difficulty to translate strategy into practice; large bureaucracy; lack of knowledge about the third sector	Lack of time; career implications; lack of knowledge about the third sector; fairly narrow academic interests; administrative barriers	Lack of capacity and resources; lack of knowledge about the university; focus on mission and service delivery; consultation fatigue; delivery prioritized over reflection	Lack of time; lack of confidence; lack of support from organisation; lack of interest
Potential offer	Access to resources (financial and in-kind), knowledge and expertise; high status, credibility and clout; international outlook and	Knowledge, expertise, passion, international and national connections, access to students, fresh perspective on service delivery	Access to service users and communities; access to policymakers and advocacy; real-life experiences for students;	enthusiasm and a can-do attitude; practical knowledge and expertise; fresh perspective on academic research, what's feasible and useful;

	connections		opportunities for disseminating research to new audiences; access to potential new students among service users, staff and community	mentoring of students; support and ethical treatment of research participants
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Please note that this table does not claim to be an exhausting representation of all drivers and constraints, but of the most salient that emerged from this research study.