



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

Research Institute for Health and Social Change

“We don't believe you want a genuine partnership.” University work with communities

Karen Duggan and Carolyn Kagan

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Funding body, HEFCE (2006) strategic plan states:

We want to focus more on our support for HE to contribute to wider social agendas. This includes its contribution to civic life and developing civilising values; social, community and environmental support and regeneration; cultural, intellectual and moral enrichment; and participation as a nation and as individuals in global development, communication and problem-solving. (p.37).

Further, the plan states:

We will continue to promote and support collaboration – between HEIs, as well as between HE and users and other stakeholders – as an intrinsic feature of third stream activity.(p.39).

The challenge

In terms of community it presents a challenge to universities to be of and not just in the community; not simply to engage in “knowledge-transfer” but to establish a dialogue across the boundary between the university and its community which is open-ended, fluid and experimental. (Watson, 2003:16)

Urban Regeneration project (£3.16 m)

To address key urban regeneration challenges in the North Of England through interdisciplinary collaboration between the partner universities and practitioner organisations, particularly in the public and voluntary sectors, and to enhance their collective impact on society.

To build a long term strategic alliance between core university partners while developing a distinctive form of knowledge transfer (KT)), which is both teaching and research-driven, in order to meet the needs of organisations and professionals in business and the community

Themes

- **Community cohesion**
 - **Community psychology and wellbeing**
 - **Urban education**
 - **Sport and physical activity**
- Crime
- Health and wellbeing
- Enterprise

A cohesive community:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.....

Project development



- ◆ Clarify what community cohesion and regeneration might mean to the different partners involved;
- ◆ Work across knowledge transfer managers and academics in the universities;
- ◆ Identify viable projects within the timescale (maximum 18 months)

- ◆ identify community partners and viable projects addressing their needs across the three sub-themes;
- ◆ Identify colleagues in partner universities who had complementary expertise to share and combine;



Pre-empting guidance from across the project, we, in community cohesion, decided to undertake a development process that sought to reflect community psychological values and practices, and be:

- Led by the interests and needs of community and voluntary sector and public sector groups
- Open, transparent and inclusive
- Facilitate 'contact before content' and bring people with different interests together in order to develop ideas.

WORKING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

Outside in boundaries include:

- ◆ Boundaries between community group(s) - community, voluntary and public sector groups;
- ◆ Boundaries between citizens and community groups
- ◆ Boundaries between community group(s) and universities
- ◆ Boundaries between different types of activities - services and action of community groups and research, consultancy or teaching in universities



Inside out boundaries include:

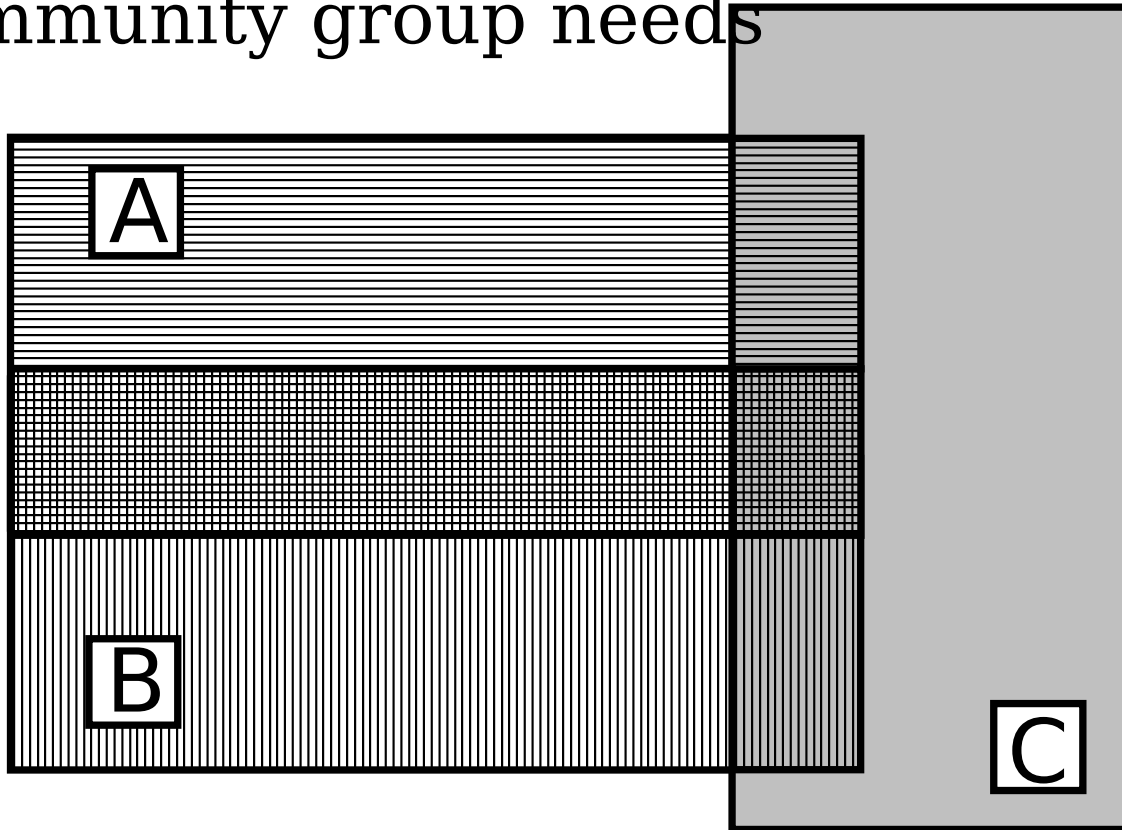
- ◆ Boundaries between different universities
- ◆ Boundaries between different disciplines
- ◆ Boundaries between academics and knowledge transfer (or development) managers
- ◆ Boundaries between engagement and other academic practices.



Working at the edge

e.g. University 2, discipline 2

e.g. community group needs



e.g. University 1, discipline 1

Time and Trust are key

.... long-term collaborations foster the trust and shared values critical to successful work involving partners based in widely differing institutional settings. Partnerships enduring over many a period of many years .. provide a stable context for both short consultative and medium-term contractual community-based research projects.but as the longevity, stability and beneficial outcomes of partnerships grow, so too do the institutional supports required to foster them...Generally the longer the project, the more tightly linked the partners and the more involved both (for all) partners are in all stages of the research process. (Savan, 2004:382/3)

Then communities may start to
believe us