Community Research Framework –
Urbanising Research

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MOVING FROM EXPLOITATIVE EXTRACTION TO GENUINE COLLABORATION

BACKGROUND

- Institutional disconnect has led to **subaltern counter-public spheres** which have been sceptical of mainstream narratives

- There exists a challenge with building research among complex communities and forging insightful discourses with participants usually **averse to speaking about their narratives**

- Communities experience **'research fatigue'** in that they have been over- researched

PROBLEMATIC RESEARCH PRACTICE IN THE URBAN LOCALE OFTEN INVOLVES

1. A lack of adequate community consultation

2. Cultural incapacity - an absence of both the cultural competence to decipher urban code-switching and Ebonics, and the cross-cultural dexterity to build rapport

3. Parachute models of research- researchers and academics may merely take from communities without imparting any stake in the research process to communities

4. Extraction research or exploitative research

5. A 'contractualising' relationship with participants and potential participants

THE RESULT

Research is therefore devoid having the benefit of accessing primary research data directly from hard-to-reach communities and consequently **fails to adequately understand dynamics at play in conurbations such as social deprived and marginalised communities**

The ubiquity of bureaucracy and documentation in the West therefore is by no means universal and bringing documentation into the equation with participants and potential participants with whom minimal rapport has been struck can lead to distrust.

THE SOLUTION – COMMUNITY RESEARCH MODEL

Research must not only be decolonised but also 'urbanised'.

'The community research framework presented herein is well-positioned to **access deeper nuances across the urban environment**. While our researchers, due to their **positionality and credibility** in the communities, are able to tap into deep insights to inform research.'

FOR TOO LONG, COMMUNITIES SUFFERING FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF INEQUALITY AND WEALTH DISPARITY HAVE BEEN THE *SUBJECTS* OF RESEARCH PROGRAMMES, INSTEAD OF *PARTNERS* IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND *ACTIVE AGENTS* IN DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS FOR IMPROVED WELLBEING.

WHO? COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

- They are recruited, training and upskilled and can then conduct a variety of research projects, **leveraging their knowledge**, **awareness and relationships** in relevant local communities and can deliver untapped and nuanced insight

- This approach is **sustainable and importantly it leaves a legacy in communities**, builds capacity and ownership of individuals in these communities and creates opportunities through employment, development and entrepreneurship.

'Becoming a Community Researcher has provided me with the opportunity to find my own voice while addressing social inequalities and injustices that affect our communities. It has also given me the opportunity to learn from and co-create with a diverse, innovative and multi- skilled team that isn't afraid to challenge the status quo in all that they do. That to me is invaluable.'

Sylvana Walcott, Community Researcher

HOW? COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

- **Transparent, reciprocal and sustainable partnerships** are established through **trusting relationships** and **genuine co-ownership** of the research process and product.

- This **equitable collaboration** will mitigate against potential conflicts between community researchers and other stakeholders and facilitate appropriate research methods and the continuous dialogue throughout all stages of the research.

HOW? CO-DESIGN APPROACH

- **Local knowledge** should not be disregarded or deemed 'inferior'.

- This fosters a **democratisation of knowledge with co-ownership** of the research.

- Communities need to play a role at every stage of research from data collection through to analysis and recommendations. In this way, **an equity-based co-learning environment** is developed wherein professional researchers, key stakeholders and community researchers all partake in the research process.

WHAT? PRINCIPLES

- Treat community researchers as equal partners – that means partnering with them from the start before the research questions are set, maintaining that partnership through to the end, and paying for their time

- Pay research participants for their time and insights at every stage

- Make participation in your research fun and worthwhile

- Avoid taking big chunks of people's time, for free, and then boring them!

- Hold yourself accountable for the effects of your research – do all you can to ensure that something tangibly beneficial comes out of it for the community you studied

- Be completely clear with participants about who's funding the research, what it's for, and what might come out of it

A NEW FRAMEWORK

Theme	How is this validated?
Co-ownership and Logical Continuum	• Continuous dialogue throughout all stages of the research • Communities see tangible results of research in their locales
Reciprocity	• Offer community researchers and participants other opportunities if possible (e.g. give young people insight into university applications if you're an academic)
Equity	• The democratisation of knowledge for open discussion on research
Cultural Interface	• Developing relationships and obtaining research in 'hard to reach' communities for empirical data can assist in making exceptional contributions to knowledge

Theme	How is this validated?
Inbetweener Approach	• Allows for the utilisation of both outsider and insider skills in conducting research
Urban Social Brokerage	• Researchers need to be well-acquainted with urban ecosystems • Certain nuances, emerging trends and cultural relevancies and dynamics are taken into a contextualised consideration and evaluated in relation to data collected
Urban Code of Conduct and 'Guesthood'	• Knowledge of code switching; adapting learned skilled across urban the local – brought into the methodological approach • Bespoke management of risks • Street confidence and cross-cultural dexterity

Theme	How is this validated?
Respect and Cultural Competence	• This must work in tandem with research integrity and ethics so as not to not compromise validity
Reflection	• Provides a safe space for community researchers to reflect on their experiences and feelings in the research. • Community researchers will navigate a multitude of layers and nuances in their data gathering which will require reflection on their own positions and identities.
Epistemic Disobedience	• Western universities cannot treat ethics as a 'one size fits all' • Tapping into African-centric/indigenous approaches harking to notions of the 'village meeting' wherein ideas are shared • Soft skills are effective

Community Research In Action – Intelligence Gathering

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GET IN TOUCH FOR MORE INFORMATION

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