



## Dear Reader

We have not had government ministers write for the bulletin for a while. The last one was David Miliband, the then Minister of Communities and Local Government, who looked at social exclusion and the elderly. The minister argued the need for a new partnership, between the state, local government and the third sector, with the aim of putting more control and power in local hands.

When you have read Matthew Scott's reminder to us in this bulletin that power is never given and want to compare his very personal account of the demise of the Community Empowerment Networks to David Miliband's contribution you might want to have a quick look at the centenary bulletin on our Website. ([http://www.arvac.org.uk/docs/info\\_bull100b.html](http://www.arvac.org.uk/docs/info_bull100b.html))

Given the chasm between David Miliband's contribution and the shattered hopes of the CENs I am wondering whether Nick is right when he suggests

that the policy environment should recognise the volunteer-led groups.

What good would come from it?

What would happen if the policy environment does not recognise them?

Will the volunteers suddenly stop volunteering?

When did we last ask ourselves what it would mean for the Voluntary and Community Sector to completely step back from engagement with government. To simply not seek recognition and to simply say no to doing its work.

When did we last ask what would happen to government plans like the Olympics if that were the case.

Maybe a government minister will want to address some of these questions in the next issue rather than just launching another initiative.

With or without such prominent contributors I will continue to volunteer to edit the

bulletin and I hope you will continue to volunteer to write for it.

Write, for example, a very personal account about life and work in a CVS like Anastasia Milhailidou, who calls on us to stay young at heart and rebellious too.

Or write for our regular task of reporting news and information about all aspects of research in the voluntary and community sector like Nick Ockenden and Cathy Pharoah who are reporting from new research and our regular reviewers Fiona Poland and John Diamond who are looking at some new publications.

I hope you will continue to use the bulletin as a forum for personal accounts and to challenge policy as well as ensuring that we stay on top of the research agenda.

**Jurgen Grotz**  
(editor)

### Inside this issue:

- Matthew Scott** 2  
discusses the legacy of Community Empowerment Networks.
- Anastasia Milhailidou** 4  
provides very personal perspective on the work in a CVS.
- Nick Ockenden** 6  
reports on recent research *Volunteering to Lead*
- Cathy Pharoah** 8  
reports from new research about charities financial future.
- John Diamond** 10  
reviews *Systematic Action Research* by Danny Burns.
- Fiona Poland** 12  
reviews *Community University Partnerships in Practice*.

## Matthew Scott

Government hand-washing guidance – the legacy of CENs

*'Community empowerment is local government's core business'*

*Simon Milton (in DCLG's 2007 Action Plan for Community Empowerment)*

*'Power is never given'*

*Operation Black Vote organising slogan*

One of the ironies of community empowerment networks (CEN's) was that they couldn't empower themselves, or more accurately save themselves from the crude dynamics of how power works at both a central and local level.

Indeed it is a mark of their success that they did not try to empower themselves by becoming arms length council service providers.

It should have been written into one of the hundreds of targets in the 2001 Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan to get those who think they have the monopoly of power to behave true to form. Because they did. As it turned out it was always going to be easy to sit tight, go slow, wait for government to change its mind and then Hoover up the resources as a newly trusted community leader.

The challenge facing Community Empowerment Networks was about manifesting a radical political possibility. Maybe it wasn't even that radical – the idea that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) should be equal partners and that some resource be ring fenced to that end. The idea that the VCS needed to reach out into the wider community and do more than just try to recruit people on to management committees and get them to go on training courses. The idea that the VCS was a central, yet separately defined player that could go to the partnership table on its own terms. And of course the hope that local authorities, rather than lobbying central government for

years thereafter, successfully as it turns out, to get rid of CENs and give the bulk of the resource to them, could nurture a plurality of voices, not crush them.

The circular trajectory is instructive in the light of an imminent Empowerment White Paper, for the obvious reason that the last time the sector heard about empowerment it was that the CEN infrastructure, in the form of the Single Community Programme and hence the tripartite integrity of Local Strategic Partnerships was going to be wound down. Community empowerment is no longer about an independent third sector; it has become the main business of local authorities. Black is the new white.

Third way and reformist approaches by government as practised on the community have a talent for ambiguity and expansiveness – all things are possible, and then, they're not. It should be possible to have both a strong local authority and thriving third sector, but it mostly isn't, because both their existences hang by a thread. Constitutionally there is not right for local authorities to exist. The Widdicombe Commission of 1986 stated it in exactly those terms and nothing structural has changed significantly since. Parliament is sovereign and under an increasingly presidential style of government it is unlikely that local authorities will be able to be empowered to, for example raise the majority of their own finances by local taxation, build up as opposed to deplete their own housing stock and so on. It is indeed unlikely that local authorities will assert an independent autonomy based on the fact of an actual local mandate, as opposed to overseeing increasingly distant hybrid services.

The cat and mouse game that defines the central local relationship, between Westminster and the local town hall should sound familiar in the context of CENs. Local authorities newly empowered to empower local people, until the next throw of the policy dice at least.

Both local government and the VCS have been predictably moulded, through a plethora of modernising templates and the market based approach of new public management. But to what end? Is the fetish for technocratic solutions from the centre working? At some point, in order to create deep and truly transformational change, both in terms of democracy and services, government has to genuinely let go. This letting go is distinct and different from the neo liberal drift that would have government's do less and citizens more. Empowerment as outsourcing and offloading is not going to transform anything. Active and sustainable communities are built on nothing less than social justice and mutual respect – to do this power structures must be changed not shored up, because they are the issue that prevents people participating in the host of other issues that affect their lives.

The Power Inquiry reported back in 2006 that 'the solution is to download power by rebalancing the system towards the people'. How clear does it have to be? People want an alternative not more of the same. The dilemma for government is that, for all the dedication of its staff and leaders, it is locked into a central contradiction of our times: people expect and want something else. Increasingly we know and feel that another world is both necessary and possible, most obviously on a global level but also in the local spaces of our lives.

There are several convenient but constraining boxes that can package off the much needed debate about empowerment – the compartmentalisation of the third sector, of local government, of public services – can stop us from asking the bigger political questions. But asking questions sets in train a genuine dialogue for transformative action, not the simulacra of entrapment. Thankfully the logic of empowerment is unstable and contagious, how much giving of power is ever going to be enough?

If you're part of the problem and have a vested interest in resourcing the status quo (public choice theory) are there any recent examples of successful bucking the trend? This is the challenge and the lesson of CEN's. CEN's took a first term New Labour government at its word and on their better days, pushed the boundaries of what had been possible, by the voluntary and community sector (VCS) at a local level. But also in their bolder moments, challenged externally the vested interests and oppressive practices, we know so well, that give the lie to partnership working. For that reason they were closed down. And for that reason they will need to be reinvented and return.

**Matthew Scott is the director of the Community Sector Coalition.**

## Anastasia Mihailidou

Voluntary Action and its infrastructure, *Quo vadis?*

A CVS (and very personal) perspective.

Last month Steven Howlett asked me to do a short presentation at the meeting of the Centre for the Study of Voluntary and Community Activity, on the (perceived) research needs of the voluntary sector infrastructure.

After many scribbled bits of paper scattered around my house, and many chats with colleagues, I came up with a list of research questions/statements. No, I am not going to repeat those questions verbatim here, but I will look at the key questions and some of the responses from the Centre members

I am not writing here as some type of expert. I am writing as someone with a healthy understanding of the sector, and above everything else, an experience of being a front line practitioner within the infrastructure sector. I need to clarify here that my experience comes specifically from CVS type organisations, and therefore throughout this article I use the term infrastructure as a generalisation.

I have been working with infrastructure bodies for the last five years. I've got faith in the value of our work. I'm also proud of the work we are doing. I can see the difference we make. I can even see the impact in the local community and sector.

In my everyday work, all I see is under-resourced, disillusioned organisations, battling constant uncertainty, with very high staff turnover, and weak practices that do not allow us to lead by example. Most importantly I see a distinct lack of identity.

CVS have been operating in this country for many decades. Why none of my friends understand what I do for a living? Why do people think of bridges and roads in developing countries when we mention voluntary sector infrastructure? Hasn't the principle of a CVS (in whatever size or form) been around long enough to allow for some 'brand recognition'? Most importantly, why do we have to come across small grassroots organisations and representatives from local funding bodies that do not know of our existence? And lastly, why do the trustees of a CVS (a membership body by definition) refer to the CVS as 'them' rather than 'us'?

All these self reflective questions, are linked in a complex way with the question set in the previous ARVAC Bulletin: '*Who builds Britain's Voluntary Sector infrastructure?*'.

If we first look at the impact that infrastructure has, then we realise that besides anecdotal evidence (like my vague statement at the very beginning of the text), we don't have any other proof on the effect that our work has. Most of the evidence is spasmodic response to the demands of funders, but in reality we don't have a clue about the real effect.

Impact linked with the support needs of the local sector, should be key driver of our work, but as I hinted above, we respond to funders' needs rather than the real needs of the sector.

Considering that the majority of CVS around the country are funded by local authorities, we can all probably safely assume that our key driver is the local council's budget! Call me a cynic, but if you ask most of the people in the field will give you similar responses. During the Centre meeting, most of those present agreed with these questions/statements and shared similar experience. In addition, it was interesting to hear that Volunteer Centres, another distinct type of infrastructure organisation, has had to deal with a similar identity crisis in the recent years.

And it makes me think: although as a professional with a questioning nature, I would love to see research undertaken on the impact of our work to the local sector and community, I am very doubtful on the difference that this research could make to the support/funding/recognition we receive; or even to the services we are able to provide.

So where exactly is our proud independence? Where are our trustees standing in this situation? Are we dealing with a genetic malfunction of our governance? A fault in the blueprint? Or is it just a sign of the era we are travelling through?

I am not even sure that there are any valid answers to the plethora of questions I've asked. I do feel that some of the answers might come from finding our own identity and giving ourselves that brave look in the mirror first thing in the morning. This way we might see the truth and understand if we are conformist, middle class, middle aged, with 1.9 children (or whatever the average is these days)? Or are we rebellious teenagers that don't take anything for granted? And most importantly which one should we be?

What I mean is that by nature we should be providing an independent voice, doubting existing authority and aim to develop that debate that opens healthy dialogue for a fairer society. Unfortunately, we seem to be mostly compromised, following the myopic view (and budget) of local authorities.

I don't have any specific evidence, but I do believe that a stronger, healthier governance, with new ideas and an unbreakable faith on our independence, can help start (or re-start) a new, more optimistic era for the infrastructure. An era that is focused and driven by the needs of the sector. That is why we are here after all. Maybe we should all follow Andy Benson's lead and join the National Coalition for Independent Action (ARVAC Bulletin, issue 103), and put our energy towards trying to change the world.

Along with the Wolfenden Commission report on the future of the Voluntary Sector, I turn thirty as well this year, and I wanted to, once again, thank Colin Rochester, for helping me 'wake up' and be a teenager myself again: The only way of going forward is to doubt our own identity. Why should a CVS structure be taken for granted? Who says that we are what the sector needs? And what is the best support we can provide?

Dear readers, I have to apologise. I've given more questions than answers. But let's try to be positive: if we all continue the questioning, we have more chances to remain young at heart!

**Anastasia Mihailidou is Partnership Engagement Development Manager at Surrey Community Action**



## Nick Ockenden

### Volunteering to Lead

A huge amount of volunteering takes place within groups that are led by volunteers. These groups can have a major impact on people's quality of life and living conditions, providing opportunities for democratic and grassroots participation. This area has, however, suffered from a lack of research and we know relatively little about how these groups function, and even less about how they are led.

In March, the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) published a new study exploring leadership within these groups and the challenges associated with their growth and development. To do this, IVR worked with six volunteer-led groups in two geographical locations in England over the past year. This article gives a flavour of the key findings emerging from the study.

#### Defining characteristics of leadership volunteer-led groups

All of the groups studied had a structure in place, being led by a figurehead who was often defined by their external-facing role. A committee and a wider membership of volunteers supported the leaders. The complexity of the structures, however, varied between groups.

The groups functioned through a mix of informal yet structured systems of management. They had structures in place and adhered to protocol when necessary, yet did so in a way that suited their group and the volunteers. Moreover, groups often felt strongly that imposing more formal systems of volunteer management on them would be inappropriate and ineffective. Similar levels of informality were observed in the process of electing leaders and committee members,

although protocol was followed in all instances. There is a possibility that this may be observed from an external perspective as somewhat chaotic, perhaps as a result of the bureaucratic lens through which much commentary may take place. While such systems may appear 'messy' from the outside, in each of the groups, they functioned effectively.

#### Barriers and challenges for volunteers as group leaders

Collective systems of group work were evident in all of the case studies to varying degrees, and the volunteers demonstrated very high levels of involvement, commitment and passion. There was often, however, a disproportionately high level of involvement from a smaller core of individuals, with an active committee and a less active wider membership of volunteers. Within the committee itself, commitment, drive and passion were generally much more pronounced amongst the leaders of the group.

A particularly interesting finding of the study was that time was rarely identified by leaders as a barrier to their involvement, and overburdening did not appear to be seen to be a major problem. This could be because there was often a blurred line between the activities volunteers undertook in their social life and within the group. Furthermore, the volunteers often saw participation as enjoyable. It is not easy to compartmentalise forms of voluntary activity, however, and volunteering in activities that can be linked to leisure may be far more fluid than those which can occur in a more formal setting. In several instances, the negative impacts of workload were further minimised by the successful delegation of activities and tasks to other volunteers.

The study found limits to the collective involvement of volunteers in the decision making process of the groups observed, with the majority of responsibilities falling to the committee rather than to all volunteers. It may be possible that this could be exacerbated by the strength of the leader's personality and the effective influence of one individual's vision. This study suggests that, albeit unintentionally, there is a risk that volunteers may risk being excluded from decision making processes in such groups.

#### Impacts of ongoing growth and development

The groups studied were in different stages of their development, ranging from those that were less than a year old to one that was over 50 years old. Even in the more established groups, their evolution and growth tended to be slow and measured. Reflecting their grassroots nature, where growth did take place it was always in response to community needs and no groups appeared interested in growth for growth's sake. Furthermore, there was no evidence to suggest that this form of growth changed the remit or ethos of the group, possibly because of the stability of leadership within the oldest groups.

The study found that cause and effect of growth and development could sometimes become blurred. Certain indicators and results of growth, such as acquiring new buildings and assets, employing paid staff, or introducing new structures to address power struggles, can themselves act as catalysts for further growth. It may be possible, for example, that groups may reach a size at which they require paid staff; while employment of paid staff can be a significant challenge for groups, it is also one that has potential to considerably increase their capacity, enabling further growth.

#### A unique form of volunteering

This study found that volunteer-led groups often function in ways that are very different to those within larger volunteer-involving organisations with paid staff. The groups observed were nonetheless highly effective at what they did and successfully fulfilled a community need that was not met elsewhere.

Evidence suggests, however, that volunteering in volunteer-led groups may not be widely recognised by those within the policy environment. This form of volunteering needs to be central to their thoughts and not on the periphery. It is important that the informal, non corporate model of volunteering that was observed within the volunteer-led groups studied is recognised as valid, and moreover, a system that works effectively. Evidence suggests that a more formal model cannot and should not be imposed on, or even translated to, this form of volunteering and capacity-building initiatives that seek to do this should be avoided. If this form of volunteering is to thrive and continue to develop in its own unique way, policy at all levels needs to recognise and support volunteer-led groups as a valuable and legitimate form of volunteering in itself.

Copies of the full report and a summary Research Bulletin can be downloaded in PDF format from [www.ivr.org.uk](http://www.ivr.org.uk).

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## Cathy Pharoah

### New research report suggests charities face difficult financial times

2006/07 saw considerable change in the charity funding environment. The year began as the new Office of the Third Sector (OTS) came into being, saw publication of the major OTS review of the sector, *The future of the Third Sector in Social and Economic Regeneration*, and closed with the onset of the economic recession. The economic climate is now beginning to cause charities serious concern, and up-to-date research on the financial state of the sector is timely. A new report on annual results for the UK's largest charities which fundraise, *Charity Market Monitor 2008 (CMM)*, will be published next month\*. In addition to a detailed analysis of patterns in income from various fundraising streams amongst the major charities including giving, trusts and events, the report looks at the impact of statutory funding on existing and new charities, and places a focus on some major charity sub-sectors including local hospices, environment and social care charities. This article previews some results.

#### Snapshot for 2006/07

The research findings of the report indicate that charities are already experiencing the fall-out from a slow-down in the economic environment. Growth rates for the major charities – a sure harbinger for what will happen to the smaller charities – indicate a decline in growth is underway. Both statutory and fundraising income showed slow growth rates between 2005/06 and 2006/07. A source of particular concern is that an analysis of five-year trends in the total income of social welfare charities indicated very little cause for complacency in spite of the stream of statutory funding and the growth of their role in service provision.

#### Legacies

Legacies are the backbone of fundraising, and growth rates boomed during the '80s and '90s. A new analysis of five-year real trends in legacy income shows very modest across-the-board growth, although some individual charities did much better than others. Only 15% of wills contain a charitable bequest. The Legacy Promotion Campaign believes that its work in encouraging people to make a charitable bequest has had some effect in raising awareness of its value, but there is clearly a lot to do in preparation for the huge inter-generational transfers of wealth that will take place over the next decade or so. Charities need to get cracking on this – expert commentary in the report suggests the news on property prices is only bad in relation to legacy values.

#### Fundraising

The report contains a detailed analysis of individual fundraising streams, including community fundraising, which for the first time draws on the under-utilised wealth of information in the annual reports and accounts of the largest fundraising charities. It provides new insights into how the major charities achieved a successful total fundraising income of almost £5 billion in 2006/07.

The results show balance and diversity in the fundraising of the major charities. After legacies, fundraising and appeals, trust donations and regular giving emerge as the three main streams of fundraising. The table below shows the average value of each of these streams to a major charity, and its share of fund-raised income.



	Average value per charity £m	Income from this stream as % of all fundraised income (recipients only)
Trust donations	3.3	22%
Regular giving/ subscriptions	6.8	32%
Fundraising/ appeals	7.1	26%

Almost one-third of the 300 charities included in the analysis were supported with trust donations, but this is likely to be worth just 15-20% of trust grant-making, evidence of how the charitable trusts use a large part of their funds to support smaller organizations. The report shows how corporate giving is more heavily concentrated on the largest charities.

### Entrepreneurialism

The scale and nature of fundraising varies hugely by cause. The research shows how sectors such as faith-based organizations, which survive because of the regular committed and growing support they attract from individual donors, still hold a substantial position in the charity universe. But the balance being maintained between fundraised (relatively independent) income and earned income (largely from government) varies enormously by cause. Although social care charities have been in the frontline to receive statutory support for primary purpose activities, a wide range of different kinds of charities today earn their income through charitable activities, from delivery of services to help other charities do their job (CAF), providing direct care to the beneficiary group represented by the charity (NCH), and providing professional services to members (RCN).

### Local support

This type of activity lies at the heart of social enterprise, but the report also shows how some of the new charitable trusts created out of hived-off former central or local authority services and funds such as the New Deal for Communities are

emerging as competitors amongst the top 3% of charities by income. Local trusts in the management of local arts, culture and environment resources have significant scope to attract the support of local donors. The report's evidence from the hospices and the environment sub-sectors demonstrates the strength of local fundraising where people know and care about local facilities.

### Competition for resources

The indicators suggest that the charity funding environment is going to get tighter economically at a time when both global and local competition for resources is growing. The sector may become increasingly competitive as individual charities use their advantages, often their size, to bolster their own position. A better response would be to see more collective sector approaches to raising public awareness of how social needs increase during a recession and of the vulnerability of many charities' funding. Could the sector become more collaborative and inventive under pressure, rather than increasingly competitive?

*\*Charity Market Monitor 2008 will be published by CaritasData in partnership with Cass Business School in July, and details can be obtained on 0207 549 8672 or Email:*

[enquiries@caritasdata.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@caritasdata.co.uk)

**Cathy Pharoah is an independent analyst.**

**Danny Burns (2007) Systemic Action Research: A strategy for whole system change Bristol: Policy Press (ISBN: 978-1 86134-737-4 194 pages)**

**Reviewed by John Diamond**

**"The scale and ambition of this excellent book is set out in the following extract:**

**"Systemic action research.....is a means for getting things done.....it is a process that can be built into the "everyday" practice of community activists, professionals, policy makers and change agents....The premise on which this book is built is that *we can all do it.*" (p4)**

In many ways Danny Burns is not presenting a new approach or promoting an innovative take on how to engage non-researchers in the "mysteries" of undertaking, valuing and using research skills or methods. On the contrary he sets out to establish both his practice and academic credentials by a carefully and engaging summary of the ideas, concepts and application of action research. The chapters where he does this both meet the needs of the non-specialists as well as those who are already aware of the key concepts and thinkers/practitioners. By setting out the family tree of action research and, at the same time, being very clear about its potential to ask awkward questions he combines two important qualities about the book. As I highlighted in the quote I chose to open this review Danny Burns does not attempt to marginalise the political challenge of this book. It is not (in my view) an accident that in his list of those who can

gain by engaging in the ideas explored in the book he starts with "community activists".

The significance of his approach to power and political ideas is very well discussed in the opening chapters of the book. In particular, he draws upon a wide literature to support his general argument that action research has the potential to enable residents/activists to argue their case with greater weight and to inform those who have to effect change or have the potential to affect change. These "change agents" are - as he suggests- not always individuals who occupy positions with status and responsibility but may be individuals with influence. In many cases, though, they may be individuals with power and authority who resist challenge. The strength of action research is, according to Burns, that it "empowers" those who have the findings to challenge those who have the resources.

A particular strength of the whole book is the way Burns seeks to integrate his take on action research with the direct experience of individuals or through case studies which he has drawn upon to illustrate his argument and practice. The presentation of the book - its layout, use of graphics and text- enables the reader to make connections between the academic rationale and the practice of action research.

The explicit linking of theory, ideas, discussion and practice is then further supported by the way in which the notion of reflection and especially critical self reflection is discussed. In my view the legitimacy of action research is how it is based upon very detailed and challenging ideas about quality, ethics and its relationship to lived experiences. As well as accommodating contested and divergent views. In other words action research and the approach articulated by Danny Burns is not a "soft" option for voluntary and community based organisations or individuals it is rooted in a model of undertaking research which is "rigorous" and of value.

The section on action research facilitators illustrates these conclusions very effectively. As does the chapter on quality and ethics. It is always refreshing and rewarding to read the case for research by and with community activists (as well as other professionals agencies) which starts from the premise that social science enquiries can (and should ) be testing, authoritative and also exciting and fun !!

The conclusion and Burns' own final reflection state the case for action research and the model advocated by Burns. As he notes one of the key elements discussed is the idea of "commissioning uncertainty" which I especially warm to. He makes the point that there has been a growth in the public sector in accepting the idea of "managing uncertainty". He wants to go further and to encourage the idea that we cannot always predict the outcome of some process or policy decision. And whilst it might seem counter intuitive to

promote "uncertainty" it might - actually- prepare the organisation or agency to make sense of what is happening. As a consequence this enables agencies to think differently about what constitutes evidence, to think about how to promote the "lessons" learnt, to think about valuing and promoting different voices.

In his final reflection Danny Burns provides a short but focussed summary of why his model of action research adds to our awareness and understanding: he makes two key points -- firstly, that he suggesting a change in the emphasis for the "traditional" action research community and secondly, that part of his argument is that the complex, diverse world we live in requires flexible ways of thinking and from that ways of promoting change.

I strongly recommend this book. Whilst I have cited Danny Burns throughout this review it is evident in the pages of the book and in his own comments that it is a co produced text which adds to the idea of collaboration and cooperation as key to the research process.

**Professor John Diamond works in the Centre for Local Policy Studies at Edge Hill University (Lancashire), UK.**

**Angie Hart, Elizabeth Maddison and David Wolff (editors), (2007) *Community-University Partnerships in Practice*. National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales): Leicester. ISBN 978-1-86201-317-1**

**Reviewed by: Fiona Poland,**

The work of the Brighton and Sussex programme of community-university engagement reported and represented here provides eloquent testimony to how productive such a coherent and sustained programme can be for local communities in tackling social exclusion. This book provides a thorough description of its development and underpinning philosophy, the robust infrastructures constructed to realise partnership working and examples of projects generated together with issues which needed to be addressed. Its collaborative action approach is demonstrated in the production of the book itself through writing workshops and research assistant support with chapters.

Early chapters focus on the need to adopt a thoroughgoing approach to community-university engagement to re-frame traditional academic notions of quality in knowledge for more inclusive peer-review to encourage more problem-centred, trans-disciplinary and change-oriented activity. Laing and Madison argue that such participative working can produce more socially-robust knowledge to ground universities' contributions more strategically in their local economies. This ambitious programme was kick-started in Brighton and Sussex by a grant from Atlantic Philanthropies to the community-university partnership (CUPP).

Balloch et al. report the process of developing and delivering a coherent strategy to widen access, release student capacity for community benefit and provide HE

learning opportunities with communities with momentum from senior level commitment from partner organisations. The Higher Education Funding Council for England also resourced a Brighton and Sussex Knowledge Exchange to fund, oversee and support research projects working to a core focus on tackling disadvantage.

Several chapters help make explicit the diversity of interests and values to be negotiated between HE and community (e.g. Aumann) against external pressures such as RAE disincentives to academics to engage in applied research (Rodriguez with Millicam). Other chapters provide CUPP case studies in developing inclusive evidence-based practice within research projects to meet needs of hard-to-reach groups including homeless LGBT youth (Cull and Platzer), substance misusers (Haynes et al) and refugee groups (Conlan et al.; Morrice with Addise; Shaafi and Woolridge), in evaluating Neighbourhood Renewal (MacDonald et al) and extended school services (Ambrose et al). These highlight specific mechanisms for governance needed to overcome anxieties in boundary-crossing. Students and diverse communities are seen to share learning and to challenge rigid curricular requirements, to enable access to art (Ridley and Fox; Millican with Nunn and Fox) and to develop an open curriculum in community architecture (Viljoen et al).

Final chapters reinforce local lessons for encouraging productive relationships in relation to the importance of infrastructure to build horizontal links between partner organisations (Hart and Aumann), to work collaboratively to overcome disadvantage and to widen benefit from university-held resources (Roker). They point up advantages for all partner organisations in more strategic and flexible thinking and in supporting community authority in evidence-building. New directions suggested by Hart and Wolff prioritise sustainability, evaluating greater complexity and demonstrating impact to build funding and partnership involvement. They argue for conceptualising community-university engagement in terms of 'communities of practice' to enable critical thinking about the boundary-work involved in engaging multiple groups and institutions.

While this work has been reported commendably promptly, its learning potential and transferability to such partnerships elsewhere in the UK could have been increased if it had been framed more critically against the wider

UK experience and history of participative and collaborative understandings of community-university engagement (e.g. as illustrated in Alcock and Scott (eds.) 2005). While links are made to US and Australian traditions of civic responsibility and philanthropic capacity it would also have been helpful to trace their links to the vigorous UK experience of university settlements, volunteering, community based learning (Hall and Hall, 2005) and, across Europe, science shop initiatives (Fischer et al, 2004), to relate to more shared contexts of community action and governance.

### References

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### EVENTS

(if you want to tell us about upcoming events please email me on [j.grotz@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:j.grotz@roehampton.ac.uk) and we try to include it in the next edition)

- Voluntary Sector in Criminal Justice: Prospects for Citizenship' to be held at Keele University 16-17 September 2008  
See <http://www.keele.ac.uk/research/lpj/VSCJ/index.htm>



## ARVACGROUP@TISCALI.CO.UK

In the last edition we launched an email discussion forum to encourage debate about issues raised within the bulletin. Everyone who has comments or questions about what is said within this bulletin can join. You will be able to read others' comments and post your own.

The forum is free and open to any reader of the bulletin. The forum will exclusively deal with discussion and not bombard you with general postings.

Not many of you joined and we don't know why and we suspended the forum. However, we thought we would have another go.

To join or to tell us why you don't think it's a good idea simply email [ARVACGROUP@TISCALI.CO.UK](mailto:ARVACGROUP@TISCALI.CO.UK).



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promoting effective community action  
through research

### About ARVAC

ARVAC (The Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector) was established in 1978. It is a membership organisation and acts as a resource for people interested in research in or on community organisations.

We believe that voluntary and community organisations play a vital role in creating and sustaining healthy communities, and that research plays an essential role in increasing the effectiveness of those organisations involved in voluntary and community action.

### We want to hear from you:

Please send us:

- News items
- Details of new publications, resources or websites
- Information about research in progress
- Meetings or events you would like us to publicise
- Comments or opinion pieces you would like to share with other ARVAC members

by e-mail to  
[j.grotz@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:j.grotz@roehampton.ac.uk)