



Dear Reader

As a sign of the times I set myself the task to combine values and targets in this editorial. The Pathway through Participation project, which Ellie Brodie will write about, would probably ask: Why? What is my 'trigger' for that?

For me, the real pleasure of editing this bulletin is that nobody makes me, and that I may set this task just because I can. I hope that in these serious times you can share this sense of freedom gained from volunteering simply because you want to and because you enjoy it.

First of all, many thanks to all who helped me to almost overcome the pyramid scheme trauma I told you about in the last edition. I am delighted that the number of readers we now know of is at least double the number I had previously estimated. Still not staggering though.

My self imposed target for this year will therefore be to not rest on these laurels but to increase readership to 1000. I will let you know if we achieve this.

In your replies some of you were also kind enough to add some comments:

"Many thanks for ARVAC, it is exactly the sort of research I need to be involved with",

"I find the bulletin useful in keeping me abreast of research material that may be helpful to my area of specialism"

"Long may it continue"

Grateful thanks therefore also to the five contributors to this bulletin. It is you who keep it going.

At our AGM John Diamond reminded us of the values we need in these changing times and his insightful talk opens

this bulletin. I was particularly struck by the optimism that shines through the quote he gives us from Howard Zinn.

I already set one target and I will add another one. I will turn my editorial gaze towards "the small scale moments", the "fun and fulfilment" of being involved and the sheer delight of conviviality. I will ask contributors to consider these and you should be able to find at least three contributions about this in the next two editions.

With this, in a not so serious but also not frivolous way, I hope I have combined one of my true values with a meaningful target. Meaningful if, as I believe, it is of interest to you.

Thank you.

Jurgen Grotz
(editor)

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John Diamond

Values in a time of transition

A presentation given at MAKING COMMUNITY RESEARCH WORK - ARVAC - 11 November 2009, London

We are living and working in challenging and testing times. I think that part of what is necessary for those of us who work in and with individuals, groups and organisations who make up the very broad family that is the Voluntary and Community Sector is to reclaim the language and vocabulary that reflects our experiences. What I have tried to do in what follows is sketch out the key themes and ideas which I have described as Necessary Values in a Time of Transition.

As part of providing a background or context to what I want to say it is important (to me) to say that I bring to this discussion a range of experiences and a history: 1974 (and 35 years ago) was when I was involved in a community based campaign supporting a local branch of Shelter lobbying the local authority where I lived over the Council's wish to build a new Town Hall at the same time as the waiting list for council houses was getting longer; I have been a trustee of two VCS based organisations (one local and one national); for the past 25 years I have worked with VCS organisations as a researcher/advocate - at a neighbourhood and national level; and I have some understanding of the ways in which the voluntary and community based sector has developed in the States.

But I am a white male professional and I acknowledge that I make sense of the world in a particular way and that this also allows me to opt out from time to time at no apparent cost to me. And this allows me to be protected in ways that will - at times- be not visible to me if I do not think, look and act. Empathy is an aspiration but thinking and acting are not. My second set of necessary values are those of taking responsibility for my actions and not sub-contracting that to someone else. It seems to me that over the past decade or more we (the white academics amongst us) have conveniently given up on our personal responsibility in the way we see/think /advise

on the world. And I think this too can be re-enforced by a narrow ethocentrism.

And as a counterpoint to such a narrowness of view my third set of values are about internationalism and looking for links between places and neighbourhoods. I think that in preparing for this talk I was struck by the power of some writers to convey human experiences - hopes, fears and aspirations in a language which both evokes a sense of place as well as a sense of movement or change. In their separate books Rebecca Solnit (*Hope in the Dark* 2005) offers a series of examples of where communities and individuals grouped together to challenge the status quo. The book is subtitled *The Untold History of People Power*. I like that ambition and scale. In a very powerful passage she describes the physicality and bustle of downtown San Francisco - and by referencing landmarks and places she draws a broader picture of struggle and conflict and she situates it in the Wednesday and Saturday markets and then goes onto make the link with the growing homelessness in California (which is getting worse).

Arundhati Roy in her recent book *Listening to the Grass Hoppers* (2009) and subtitled *Field Notes on Democracy* provides a powerful, disturbing and evocative picture of Indian politics (and how the global war on terror is being played out in the streets and communities of India).

She makes a powerful case for self organisation and self direction of campaigns. In a really telling essay she talks about the "NGOization of civil society initiatives is taking us in the opposite direction. It's depoliticizing us. Making us dependent on aid and handouts. We need to re-imagine the meaning of civil disobedience." (pp 40 - 41)

Whilst both of these writers remind me of the need to think beyond my comfort zone they also draw us to make telling parallels - the organised, professionalised layer of the sector may have more in common than it thinks with City Hall rather than the local neighbourhood. This set of observations are all about the values of independence and action rooted in neighbourhoods. But also of solidarity and equality as well. Both Rebecca Solnit and Arundhati Roy counsel against the ways in which street action can be reactionary. It is this which in the UK the BNP have drawn upon as well as the far right/fascist groups in Europe.

These values of solidarity have to be protected as well as promoted. They are also about challenging the status quo and those with vested interests. We need to draw upon the rich and diverse histories - and so there is something here for me of the importance of memory and biography and the need to respect and honour those who have led the way.

In his book *A Power Governments Cannot Suppress* (2007) the American historian Howard Zinn concludes his book of essays by talking about the Optimism of Uncertainty. It seems to me that in the present time there are times when we have no right to feel optimistic. But he makes the point (and I think here he draws upon all of the values I have tried to describe) that we can see progress and victories in small scale moments. Because small acts

“when multiplied by millions of people, can quietly become a power no government can suppress, a power that can transform the world.

Even when we don’t “win,” there is fun and fulfilment in the fact that we have been involved, with other good people, in something worthwhile. We need hope. An optimist isn’t necessarily a blithe, slightly sappy whistler in the dark of our time. To be hopeful in bad times is not being foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that

human history is a history not only of competition and cruelty but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasise in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places – and there are so many – where people have behaved magnificently, it energises us to act, and raises at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don’t have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvellous victory.

(Zinn, 2007)

It is these sets of values, aspirations and sense of potential that I think we need to re-assert and protect. Both Howard Zinn and Arundhati Roy in their different ways are reminding us of the importance of defending values and practices informed by solidarity, equality and respect. In ARVAC we need to protect and promote those values as central to what we do and in promoting – as well – the principles of independence, autonomy and equality.

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

Reference

HOWARD ZINN (2007) *A Power Governments Cannot Suppress*, San Francisco: City Light Book

Ellie Brodie

Pathways through Participation: What creates and maintains active citizenship?

What is the Pathways through Participation project?

Since April 2009, a team of researchers from a consortium led by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) with the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) and Involve, have been working on a national research programme called *Pathways through Participation*. The project looks at how and why people get involved and stay involved in different forms of participation over the course of their lives. It is a qualitative research study, funded by the Big Lottery Fund and lasts 2.5 years.

The project grew from a shared concern of the partner organisations that there is a gap in knowledge about how people's motivations and patterns of participation emerge and develop over time, and about the links between different types of participation. To address this gap, we are looking at how people participate in a wide range of social and civic activities – from being a school governor to making 'green' consumer choices, from signing a petition to joining a community group - over the course of their lives. Through finding out about people's experiences of participation, we want to explore the triggers, motivations and barriers that help or hinder people's participation.

We hope that through the improved understanding of the reasons for, and the contexts of, participation, the project will influence policy and practice, and encourage the development of opportunities for participation that are better suited to people's needs and aspirations.

How are you doing the research?

This is a qualitative research project, which will explore participation in three contrasting case studies areas: Leeds (inner city), Enfield (suburban) and Suffolk (rural). Within each case study area a series of activity mapping sessions will be carried out with the local community to identify where and how participation takes place. These sessions will be followed by a number of in-depth interviews with people involved in various levels of intensity in different participation activities. Interviews will take place in each case study area.

The final research phase will involve participatory workshops in which service providers and policy makers from voluntary and community and statutory organisations will explore and think through the implications of the research findings for them and their organisations.

Please see the project website for a fuller account of our research approach and methods.

<http://pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk>

What have you found out so far?

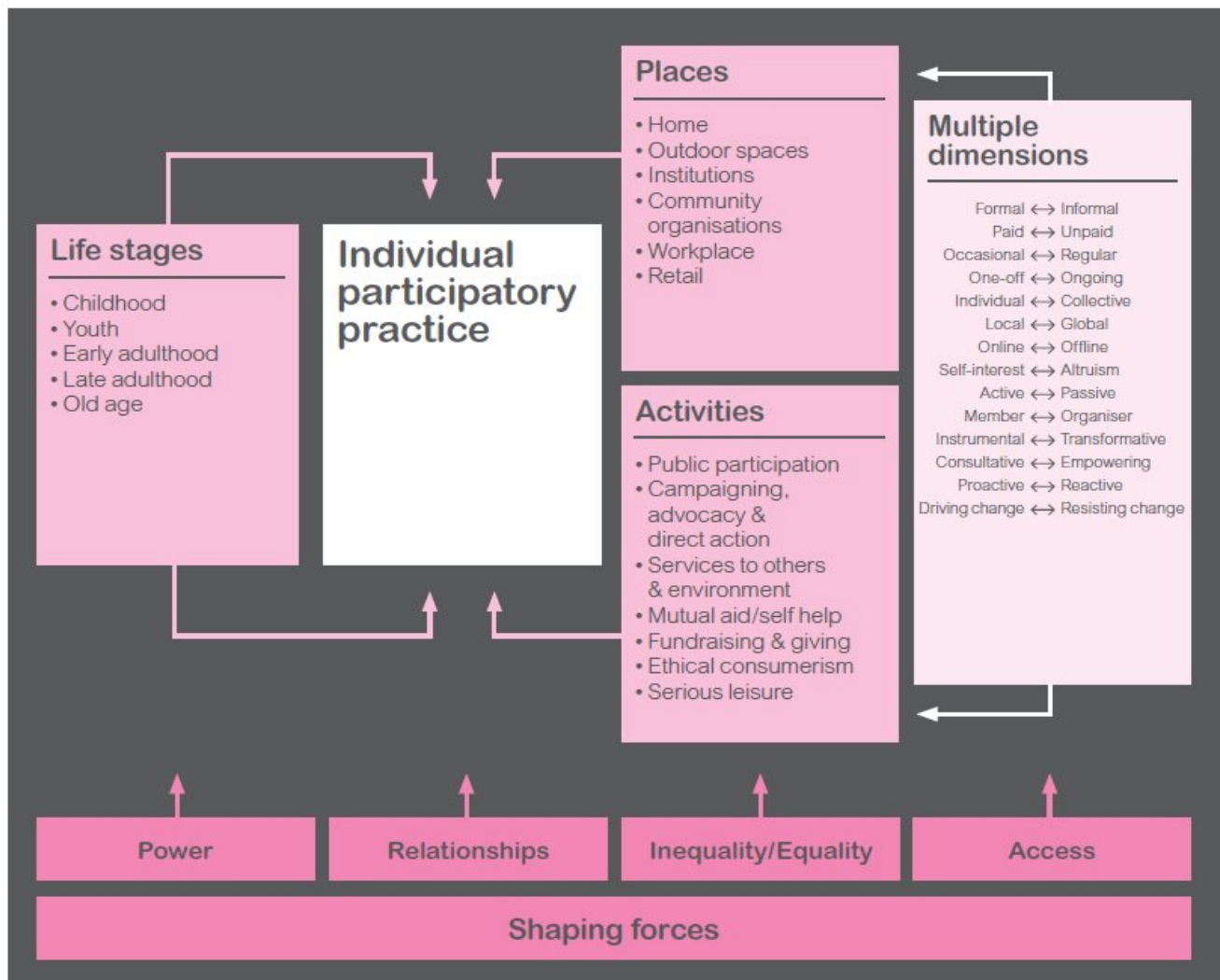
So far, we have completed a literature review and developed an emerging framework of participation. The literature review attempts to map out the vast and complex landscape of participation by integrating different bodies of literature on participation. In doing so, the review looks at: what the drivers of participation are; how participation is conceptualised; what the activities and spaces of participation are; who participates and who does not, and how individuals participate and why. The literature review reaches four conclusions:

People first: in order to understand participation, we need to understand it as an experiential phenomenon, from the point of view of the individuals involved (rather than starting with institutions, as much literature on public participation does).

Context is all important: whilst the individual is our starting point, we also need to understand the context and environment in which people live their daily lives. We are viewing participation not only as experiential, but as what Andrea Cornwall (2002) calls 'situated practice', or as rooted in space and place. Time is another important contextual factor - both in individual's life times and in the sense of spaces for participation being bounded in time.

Relationships matter: we need to understand relationships between four different elements to better understand participation: between different participatory activities (e.g. organising a local sports club and voting); between life experiences and involvement in different participatory activities; between people; and between people and the state.

The pertinence of power: all participatory activities, the contexts in which they happen and the relationships which shape them, are affected by power relationships, and as such a consideration of power and its manifestations is central to an exploration of people's pathways through participation.



These conclusions form the foundations of our emerging framework of participation, which forms the basis of our emerging investigations:

The framework reflects our understanding of what participation is and how it needs to be viewed in the context of our project. It also focuses on what we believe to be the key experiential elements of participation in practice: the actors; the activities; the places in which activities occur; and the time over which they develop. It then focuses on what have been identified as some of the key dimensions of participation in the literature – the intensity of engagement, for example, or whether it is an individual or collective activity. Finally, the framework highlights what are emerging as some of the key shaping forces, influencing people's pathways through participation.

What happens next?

We are currently writing profiles of the three case study areas with information gathered from observation of local activities, background statistical analysis and informal interviews with a wide range of individuals and organisations. We have begun carrying out activity mapping sessions in the case study areas and we are planning the in-depth interview stage of the research at the moment. We are also developing and refining the framework of participation – comments on which we welcome from ARVAC Bulletin readers.

How do I find out more?

For more information and to subscribe to our newsletter, please visit our website:

[http://
pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/](http://pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/)

Or contact the researchers working on this project:

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David Horton Smith

Interdisciplinary Voluntarism Researcher-Associations: Are we taking them for granted?

Most of us now recognise ISTR, the International Society for Third-Sector Research, and ARNOVA, the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, as “major international associations promoting research and education in the fields of philanthropy, civil society and the nonprofit sector”. In the UK you are familiar with VSSN, the Voluntary Sector Studies Network, and ARVAC, the Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector, operating on behalf of academics and practitioners in this field. Down under they have ANZTSR/Australia and New Zealand Third Sector Research. In Latin America they have a “virtual” association, La Sociedad Civil En Linea. In Asia there is a South Korean, an Indian, and a Chinese researcher association. In addition to ARNOVA, North America also has a Canadian researcher-association, ANSER.

Organizations exist on all five, inhabited continents and there are many more. Some are distinctly different from others, even within countries. I have already identified and listed over 30 such organizations and am still counting.

Where do they come from? What were the starting ingredients to give them life? What has kept them alive? Have they changed? With some of them disappearing, are we losing essential organizational memory which could help us to understand not only these organizations but also help us to understand the field of voluntary and community sector research better? Why did they disappear?

Of course, wouldn't it be great if we knew where to go if we wanted to contact a colleague in a particular nation/city who is interested in certain subject in our field? Do they have a Listserv in a country we want to learn more about? Naturally, with different national contexts we see different kinds of national organizations, what can we learn from that?

There is so much we can learn from each other not only from the papers we produce but from the way we organise ourselves and from what we want to achieve and from the questions we ask and who we ask them for.

I have recently started to do research on the origins and nature of all these national researcher-associations. I am delighted to announce this first in the ARVAC bulletin. ARVAC, to the best of my current knowledge, is the oldest surviving national organization of its kind in the world.

I am calling the research project Voluntarism Research Discipline Emergence (VRDE). Its long-term goal is to help all existing researcher-associations worldwide in our field of study by answering some of the questions above.

Very much in line with its subjects, Jurgen Grotz and I have undertaken this study to the present using volunteer researchers (ourselves). Yet I hope that some research funding will soon be available. I am therefore writing grant proposals for funding to various foundations. This may not be a good time, but isn't that true for all our national organizations?

Today I am calling all members of national and local organizations in the field of Voluntarism, Civil Society, and Social Economy Sector Research (VOCSSER) to help me with some basic information so that we can start to map the emergence of our research discipline. Please email me on dhorton-smith@hotmail.com if you have information about or links to any of them. Many thanks.

David Horton Smith is Professor Emeritus and Research Professor of Sociology, Boston College, MA, USA, and Honorary Life-time Member of ARVAC.

Naomi Landau

Knowledge exchange and the Third Sector Research Centre

The Third Sector Research Centre exists to develop research knowledge on, for and with the Third Sector in the UK. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, Office of the Third Sector, and the Barrow Cadbury Trust, it was set up to ensure a robust evidence base exists to inform policy and practice. In developing this, the Centre is keen to ensure that it engages with policy makers and practitioners to produce research that is accessible and usable to the third sector community.

The terms 'Knowledge exchange' or 'knowledge transfer' have only recently acquired currency, and are not often heard outside the academic sector. ESRC describe this as 'exchanging good ideas, research results, experiences and skills between universities, other research organisations, business, government, the public sector and the wider community to enable innovative new products, services and policies to be developed.'

It seems obvious that if you want to encourage uptake of your research findings, then people, and the right people, must know about them. The Knowledge Exchange Team, established in May last year, initially concentrated on making ourselves and our research accessible. We have developed our website (www.tsrc.ac.uk) which allows users to download our research papers, as well as find out about upcoming activities and events. We have established regular e-news bulletins, which you can sign up for online. We publicise our research to relevant stakeholders wherever possible, attend and present at events, contribute to publications and, as our findings are developed, we will promote our work through relevant other media.

Simply disseminating research findings, though, does not make them useful. In my own experience of campaigning and fundraising in the charity sector, the use of research has admittedly been haphazard and often used for a specific purpose. Someone who works daily delivering services or making policy will pay attention to general developments in opinion and debate. They will rarely have time to search for, or even read, a 30 page research report. Therefore, if research is to inform decision-making it needs to be not just available, but accessible and engaging to potential users.

Our research is published in a range of formats, including abstracts and short briefing papers to accompany each academic working paper. By working with a variety of stakeholders we hope to produce academic research that is genuinely useful to them and others. Our goal is to create a circular knowledge exchange process, which isn't just about promoting our work, but enabling the experience of the sector to inform our research agenda as well as the findings that flow from this.

We are developing ways to involve policy-makers and practitioners in our research process. We currently do this as part of our governance structures – which include an Advisory Board and research stream Reference Groups, made up of policy makers, practitioners, and other academics with a wealth of experience in the field. A seminar series has recently begun at Southampton, allowing for discussion and feedback on our research in the early stages of its development. Further events are planned to engage with a wider range of stakeholders from across the sector.

These are in fairly early stages of development, but we hope people will get involved wherever their knowledge and experience could add something to the research agenda, or where they are in a position to use such research. We will advertise all events on our website and through email bulletins.

Where relevant we try to work with other organisations, especially where their work is directly related to the topic of research, or they have networks of interested parties. We are happy to hear from any organisations who are interested in holding joint events or initiatives (our contact details are below). We are happy to attend the events of others, to present from our findings, or contribute to debates and discussions. Blogs and discussion boards have been set up on the TSRC website, and we encourage people to open dialogue with our researchers, and each other.

As our findings are produced, we will work with practitioners and policy-makers to discuss how the results might be shared and implemented. Knowledge exchange is not just about offering research, but helping to ensure that findings can be used in practice. We need to work with the experts in the field to do this, as well as to explore the future research needs that may emerge from these findings.

Through knowledge exchange at TSRC we also hope to grow the capacity of the voluntary sector in all elements of research. Where can they find it, how do they interpret and use it, and how do they go about commissioning or conducting their own research? In the short space of time that TSRC's knowledge exchange team has existed, we have received a number of queries from people along these lines. It seems there is a gap within the sector for information about research.

Easily accessible sources would certainly

help, and one of our first priorities in this respect is to establish a searchable database of existing research on the sector. This is no small task, but we know that such a database would radically change people's ability to access the information they need. We are currently in discussions with the British Library about making this a reality. There are also skills to be learnt in putting research into practice. We hope to run events and workshops that can help people to share and build these skills.

Knowledge exchange is still on a learning curve for us. The principles of communication are not new and many of these hold true for communicating research. But good communication has not always gone hand in hand with detailed academic research. Knowledge exchange, therefore, is needed to transform our research from the archives of books and journal articles into learning that can inform the behaviour of people and organisations. We hope that this will enable our research to have a real and positive impact.

In order to do this, knowledge exchange must be about more than just dissemination; it must be about involving people throughout the research process, engaging with debate, and helping to build capacity. Fundamentally, we work on the principle that many across the third sector – whether academics, practitioners or policy-makers – share an interest in how they can achieve positive change. For this reason there is genuine interest in working together, in debating, discussing and using new ideas – and this is a role that TSRC hopes to help fulfil.

Contact the Knowledge Exchange team

Tel: 020 7520 2421

Email: knowledge@tsrc.ac.uk

Naomi Landau is a Knowledge Broker in the TSRC's Knowledge Exchange Team

Fiona Poland

Making Community Research Accessible: ARVAC's Workplan for 2010

In 2010 the community sector is bracing itself against the tide of renewed resource constraints. ARVAC's aims of acting as a resource to promote effective research for communities through networking are therefore gaining relevance and momentum. This is reflected in our renewed programme of events which have also provided fresh platforms for development. Last year we broadened our reach by making membership free, bringing the added benefit to members of extending our member networks and opening up new means to pursue new developments. This will call for resource-building through well-directed fundraising and partnership working in ways which have proved productive in recent months. We have already been given a major boost by gaining Community Development Fund (CDF) grant funding of two projects we identified last year as key to strengthening our interactive networks and profile: ARVAC webpages and the Governance Pages. We are particularly grateful for this timely support.

Community Research Database

Our database of some 3,000 items is now available on line offering a significant means of addressing a number of our aims. But further development work is needed. We are seeking a postgraduate student placement or partnership arrangement to access resources to take forward a project to update the entries to cover 2006 to 2009 and then to identify and identify the key sources to monitor to ensure the database is kept up-to-date.

Once this work has been done it will be possible for us to allocate the task of monitoring one or two sources each to a group of volunteers. While we can encourage users of the database to alert us to new publications, we will need this more systematic coverage to ensure the resource is to be as comprehensive as it needs to be. Once the updating project has been completed, we will also be able to assess how much work will be needed to input new material and manage the data-

base and earmark resources for that purpose. We aim to explore the potential of a linked or complementary resource with other organisations developing community research resources such as The Third Sector Research Centre .

Bulletin

Our grateful thanks once more to Jurgen for producing our flagship output, providing three excellent issues of the Bulletin during 2009. While we have not been able to maintain comprehensive coverage of research news suggested on our website, we have been able to offer topical discussion articles reviewing, addressing and responding to developments in the sector. The monitoring system we aim to set up for the database will, however, enable us to add brief mentions of a wide range of publications and work in progress to complement the excellent articles and book reviews already offered in the Bulletin. We aim to again produce 3 issues in 2010 adding some database-related information.

Publications

Community Research – Getting Started continues to be recognised as a valuable asset and, after its re-launch at the 2008 AGM as a free on-line resource to ensure maximum community access, it has been used as the basis of further research training developments. We aim to provide some of what has been learned in these activities, as publications. Other publications can be produced as by-products of the activities discussed below.

Building on the Annual Conference

Now in partnership with CDF and with valuable input from IVAC, Turning Point and Evelyn Oldfield Unit, our annual conference, revitalised in 2008 to include the AGM has continued to considerably raise our profile, helping realise our aims; generate new networks, ideas, publications and further events growing out of networking. Related events will be actively promoted, to be organised with

minimal involvement of the committee and with partnership or event-specific resources.

Research Capacity Building and Training the Trainers

Our learning from the Community Research Project is being highlighted through the ARVAC/IVAC community research capacity-building programme. Separate funding from City Parochial Trust has now been found to organise and run this as a pilot to scope its feasibility. We aim to publish the research and training materials in an accessible form and to develop training for trainers.

Gaining new resources

While we currently still have a small working fund, to expand our work programme calls for some more administrative and technical support (primarily for the database and events). We now need to seek funding, which will need to be related to specific projects. We are making good headway in joint bidding to previous charitable funders of ARVAC who have expressed a wish to support ARVAC's work in new areas of community research capacity-building. A small funding working group of ARVAC Trustees will develop a focused bidding programme to enable strategically-relevant community research capacity-building projects.

Developing key working partnerships

We need to raise our profile to realise our aims. Our valued relationship with Roehampton University currently provide our essential base and links to its community sector-relevant education and research. We have strengthened partnerships with e.g. Islington Voluntary Action Centre, the Centre for Third Sector Research, CDF, NCVO, Charity Evaluation Service, CUE East, the Salvation Army, Turning Point and the Evelyn Oldfield Unit. This has stimulated new members to join the Trustees group. We aim to encourage Trustees to generate and lead new key areas of activity through partnership working.

Developing the Website as a Networking Tool

The ARVAC website has been prioritised as a vital means to address our aim "to encourage

and facilitate networking and collaboration between people undertaking work in this field" in particular. Funding from CDF is now enabling us to upgrade our webpages. We now aim to develop a web-based forum to engage groups working in community research.

Governance Workpages

The development by Kevin Nunan of the Big Lottery funded Governance Workpages interactively involving the sector was ARVAC's only funded project up to 2009. A successful end-of-project launch event held in June 2009, enabled plans for a follow-up exemplar project "Governance Stories" to be piloted, in partnership with Charitable Trustees Network, participants in the launch event. Funding for Governance Stories piloting has been gained from Community Development Foundation. We aim to complete the pilot and to make its products available online during 2010.

MOVING ON...

We found we were able to put most of our ideas into action in 2009 through building on links and activity clusters now demonstrating the value of the distinctive ARVAC collaborative model of community research capacity development embodied. Such increased collaboration has borne out our decision to make membership free. We now need to capitalise on the opportunities opened up by this decision. The value of the Bulletin continues to be affirmed as an valuable resource for promoting information, ideas and views across the sector. In today's environment, the excellent opportunities offered by CDF's funding for the long-planned upgrade to ARVAC's webpages are vital in enabling us to promote effective community research networking. Over the coming year we will prioritise fund-raising for events and support to meet our core aim of promoting interactive research support for communities.

Fiona Poland is the current ARVAC Chair and is Senior Lecturer in Therapy Research at the University of East Anglia.

Colin Rochester, Angela Ellis Paine and Steven Howlett with Meta Zimmeck (2010)
***Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century* Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.**

Reviewed by: Fiona Poland, University of East Anglia

14th February 2010

Volunteering is not one but many activities undertaken by many different types of people in ever-more diverse settings. This may be an uncomfortable notion for those policymakers or statutory organisations which may seek to limit their dealings with voluntary action perhaps by setting limits on what voluntary action is or should be. This book gains from its authors' wide-ranging and expert research knowledge of their field. They use this to offer those involved in managing, developing policies and studying volunteering, authoritative ways to conceptualise the complexities of volunteering and to address contemporary challenges to engagement in volunteering.

They argue strongly that while in some settings, formalising volunteering has helped increase its effectiveness and to improve volunteers' experiences, it cannot be applied uniformly to all types of volunteering. Volunteering cannot be coercive, may be mutualist and resistive rather than simply altruistic, and should encompass intrinsically-rewarding "serious leisure" activities such as sports. Failure to recognise and to support a "round earth" multi-dimensional concept of volunteering, risks undermining the volunteering impulse and its capacity to contribute to communities' vitality and to articulate their own needs.

These authors therefore need to help their intended audience both to make sense of such complexities in their work and to gain a handle on the extensive research now available. They succeed in this by tracing accessible pathways through this research to set out different models of what voluntary activity may encompass. This includes reminding us that the weight of evidence is provided through the dominant "formal ser-

vice provider" paradigm and so gives more recognition to formalised, service-delivery types of volunteering. Yet the closer voluntary activity is to community roots, the more informal its likely organisation, and the scarcer its routine records for evidencing what it does. New trends in volunteering encouraged by mass communications, such as transnational, virtual and disaster volunteering, pose further challenges to conventional forms of volunteer management and to research. While the focus remains on the case of UK volunteering they set this in the context of social and global developments.

The middle chapters move from issues of recognising volunteering, to examine social, governmental, economic and technological trends which may influence forms, levels and motivations for volunteering. If these are not well-understood (and appropriately-researched) then there may be costs for organisations hoping to recruit and retain volunteers. They go on to discuss models of volunteer management again questioning assumptions that formal models, here management models, will always improve volunteering. Much more flexibility may be needed in more informal settings and to support greater inclusiveness. Chapter 12 usefully examines a wide range of tools for measuring the impact of volunteering. This critiques the current over-emphasis on economic value attaching to "unpaid work" and argues for the value of also attending to wider contributions and of using evaluation to support organisations' self-learning.

The later chapters offer insightful commentary on the need for more inclusive and engaging volunteering, by exploring more appropriate images or “branding”. They highlight the paradox of attempting to widen participation without adequate time and resources to understand the diverse expectations and needs for support of target groups. This helps set up the Chapter 15 discussion of the need for volunteering to maintain its independence from the state through adequate representation of the sector’s interests and resisting attempts to co-opt through funding, contracting and infrastructure-building. As gaps in governance are seen to grow, such independence is essential for helping communities to counter one-sided policy assumptions and to gain facilities appropriate to their needs.

Examining experiences and quality in volunteering beyond “big players” assumptions can therefore help build sounder understandings of what volunteering does, can do, and how appropriate it may be for the changing communities where it happens. This book provides a rich resource for doing so as well as equipping its readers to engage with the growing field of volunteering research while firmly maintaining a community perspective.

Fiona Poland is the current AR-VAC Chair and is Senior Lecturer in Therapy Research at the University of East Anglia.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Action Learning Action Research Association

Eighth ALARA World Congress 2010
Melbourne, Australia 6th – 9th September
Plus two pre-congress skill-sharing days (4th - 5th)



Presented by ALARA and The Institute of Development Studies in partnership with Borderlands and oases Graduate School

Congress Theme:

'Participatory Action Research and Action Learning:

Appreciating our Pasts, Comprehending our Presents, Prefiguring our Futures'

www.alara.net.au/

Voluntary **Action** Islington

Influencing Change:

Producing and using evidence to inform better decision making in Islington

A collaborative event

Tuesday 9th March, 9.30am to 4.30pm

Voluntary Action Islington, 200a Pentonville Road, N1 9JP

We wish to present and discuss the findings of three research reports produced by Islington individuals and communities on homelessness and bereavement, community advice services and the experiences of people leaving hospital.

A day of working together to discuss research about and for Islington, and to develop an action plan for how information can be accessed and shared by all in order to inform decision making.

Resources and workshops to support community groups who want to carry out new research.

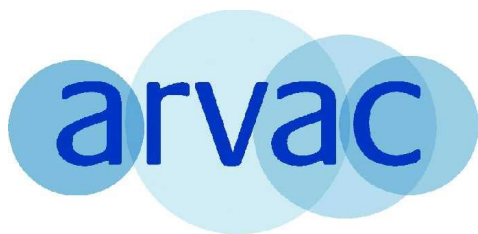
There is no charge for this event but places are limited so book early.

To book contact Ben Haynes:

T 020 7832 5801 • E ben.haynes@vai.org.uk

If you would like more information about community research and the conference please contact Louisa Hernandez:

T 020 7832 5828 • E Louisa.Hernandez@vai.org.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