

# PARTICIPATORY VISIONS:

REDESIGNING RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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**Gillian Chan**

**James Paskins, Louise Archer, Niccola Hutchinson-Pascal,  
Saffron Woodcraft, and Siobhan Morris**

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For further information please contact: [gillian.chan@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:gillian.chan@ucl.ac.uk)

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# INTRODUCTION

Despite increasing support within universities and amongst research funders for participatory research approaches, institutional processes and funding requirements continue to limit participatory engagements that meaningfully further social justice. Recognising this disconnect, [UCL's Institute for Global Prosperity](#), [Co-Production Collective](#), and [Institute for Education](#), funded by [UCL's Grand Challenge of Justice & Equality](#), set out to investigate the practical barriers university researchers and community partners face in conducting participatory social justice research.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PARTICIPATORY SOCIAL JUSTICE RESEARCH?

We use the term participatory social justice research to refer to participatory research practices (including citizen science, co-production, and participatory action research) that adopt equity, diversity and mutual benefit as critical values and desired outcomes in their approach.

**Citizen Science** refers to the practice of public participation and collaboration in scientific research to increase knowledge. It draws upon members of a community to develop and implement the research, using their local knowledge to inform, influence and shape research.

**Co-production** refers to the approach of working together in equal partnership and for equal benefit, sharing power and decision-making, in various settings, including knowledge-production, policy-making, and service design.

**Participatory Action Research** is an action-oriented and context-specific approach to enquiry that involves university researchers and participants working together to

understand a situation and change it for the better.

## HOW DID WE CONDUCT THE RESEARCH?

Between May to August 2022, 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted with research facilitators, university researchers, and community partners - all of whom had expertise supporting or engaging in participatory social justice research across a range of disciplines. We asked them what barriers they faced in conducting participatory social justice research, particularly in terms of funding and university processes. Drawing on the barriers identified in the interviews, a workshop was organised that brought together university researchers, community partners, and funders to co-produce recommendations for change.

## WHAT DID WE FIND?

We found that the obstacles research facilitators, university researchers, and community partners faced generally coalesced around three key themes: Challenge 1: Relationship-building is undervalued; Challenge 2: Community partners aren't valued; and Challenge 3: Sectors work in silos. The first part of this report details the main aspects and impacts of these challenges.

Following this, a case study of an ongoing participatory research collaboration is presented, which illustrates the importance of long-term funding to supporting cross-sectoral partnership, equality, and the development of new research pathways.

Finally, this report summarises the collective recommendations for change that emerged from our workshop with community partners, university researchers, and funders.

# CHALLENGE ONE:

## RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING IS UNDER-VALUED

### 1. LIMITED INVESTMENT & SHORT TIME-SCALES

In all of the conversations with university researchers and community partners, interviewees stressed that long-term, trusting relationships were the bedrock of participatory social justice research. The brevity of funding cycles and lack of continuous investment in relationship-building emerged as a consistent barrier. Funding timelines were often short, both in terms of the application and subsequent project. At the same time, relationship-building prior to a grant proposal and afterwards, often goes unfunded. These barriers make it difficult to:

- Engage community members as equal partners in research inquiry and design; and
- Build long-term relationships that benefit communities

#### 1.1 Difficulty engaging community partners equally in research inquiry & design

Without funding to build relationships with communities in preparation of future projects and grant proposals, the inevitable outcome is often that community members are only briefly consulted, involved without compensation or not involved at

all. This is made worse by short funding deadlines and university processes that require proposals to be submitted well in advance (often 10 days), leaving little time for researchers to jointly explore research questions and design proposals with communities. Oftentimes, this leads to tokenistic research that fails to incorporate community needs. Worse still, it can exacerbate inequalities by privileging the contributions of community members who have the means to be involved pro-bono. The quote below illustrates this:

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*We decided to apply and go through the ethical approval process before we started, because we knew that could take time. So all that work went in, and there was no funds to pay for my time. So that was where my privilege came in*

– Community partner

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#### 1.2 Difficulty building long-term relationships that benefit communities

The short-term nature of funded projects and lack of continuous investment mean that long-term, beneficial relationships are difficult to build. Without longer-term institutional support, researchers cannot take findings in new directions or jointly develop beneficial programmes. Oftentimes, this leaves communities feeling

a sense of extraction and abandoned. As the quotes below show, communities want to see research being brought forward into new knowledge and tangible change –to see growth.

## 2. LIMITED RECOGNITION OF RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING'S VALUE

For many university researchers and community partners, there was a sense that relationship-building as a skill and expertise was fundamentally undervalued. Many echoed the notion that relationship-building in research was taken for granted; or was regarded as inferior to traditional quantitative approaches. This is not only manifested through insufficient investments in relationship-building but also in the way value is framed at various stages of academic life.

### 2.1 Education tends to be competitive rather than participatory and justice-oriented

Starting from undergraduate and postgraduate education, assessment modes and assignments are overwhelmingly based on individual achievement and competition rather than collaboration and co-production. Critical questions about equity, diversity, and reciprocity in research may be discussed but this is discipline dependent. There are often no core modules across universities that discuss these issues in relation to research practice and introduce students to participatory approaches, alongside traditional quantitative and qualitative methods. This, in turn, filters into the way researchers see value and are valued.

### 2.2 Academic practices value publication prestige over community collaboration

Academic performance measures and appraisals that rely primarily on publications encourage researchers to pursue these metrics over equitable relationship-building. Publications are often irrelevant or inaccessible to communities and based on hierarchies of individual contribution (e.g. first author, second author) rather than joint effort. This disincentivises researchers from jointly producing research, producing outputs that are relevant to communities, and equally recognising community partners in work. As one university researcher highlighted:

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*If there isn't a career pathway that recognizes this as being important... with all of those metrics that we are measured by within academia: appraisals, impact factor, journal impacts, if they're not going to support what you do, you will choose a different path.*

– University researcher

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### 2.3 Leaders are rarely experts in participatory social justice research

At higher levels within academia, in university leadership and in funding panels or committees, university researchers highlighted the general absence of experts in participatory social justice research. This not only contributes to the sense it is undervalued but also leads to the systemic undervaluation of relationship-building - university processes, funding directions and overall investments cannot enable relationship-building without decision-makers who deeply understand and value it.

# CHALLENGE TWO: COMMUNITY PARTNERS AREN'T VALUED

## 1. COMMUNITY PARTNERS AREN'T SEEN AS EQUALS

A critical starting point for participatory social justice research is equity and the fundamental belief that community partners – their time, efforts, knowledge and contributions, are equally valuable as those of university researchers. Yet, even this basic premise continues to meet resistance within academia, universities and funding institutions, as those with lived experience have noted. This was particularly evident when hearing about conversations interviewees had around issues of payment, grant applications and funding structures, and authorship.

### 1.1 Payment structures under-value community partners

University researchers and community partners consistently stressed that paying people for their time and efforts was critical to acknowledging their value and enabling research involvement. Yet, some academics as well as funding and university administration, still expect that community involvement should be compensated for in vouchers, at a lower cost, or should be voluntary:

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*I have heard a patient public involvement manager say that they think patient public*

*involvement work should not be paid. It should be altruistic volunteering...that is a belief out there that you do have to battle with sometimes*

– Community partner

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Often, these expectations are baked into institutional guidelines and ways of working that academics, funders, and university administrative staff do not know how to challenge.

Even if not explicitly expressed, the reluctance to value the cost of community members' involvement is also present in the unwillingness of some academics, funders, and university administrative staff to apportion a significant amount of funding to people's time and labour:

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*In this project that was just rejected, one of the reviewers said that there was a lot of money in people's time. And I knew from that criticism that they were basically used to funding therapies, medications... whereas qualitative work, partnership work is time - is people, and they didn't see that as value for money*

– University researcher

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### 1.2 Funding structures exclude community partners from shared leadership

The undervaluing of community partners in academia and funding extends to the way grants are disbursed. Because funding is often directly held by UK universities and funding councils, and many grant applications require investigators to be UK-based academics, community members and academic partners in lower to middle income countries (LMIC) are automatically excluded from equal partnership. This maintains their financial dependency and subordinate position to UK academics in ways that fundamentally undermine equity. University researchers working with partners in LMICs have highlighted how this is problematic particularly when funding calls are aimed at global issues or are specific to LMICs:

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*It's particularly problematic with international partnerships... there is still a kind of neo-colonial history and research reality where the Global North partner gets the opportunity to get funding from the UK funder. They hold the money and then they disperse it*

– University researcher

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### **1.3 Authorship and intellectual property is unequally distributed**

The fact that community partners and partners in LMICs are not valued or treated as equals becomes particularly glaring in issues surrounding authorship and intellectual property. Interviewees noted that important publications are often not co-authored with partners:

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*I think a lot of anger comes when academics in the global north, write the paper...And basically, in the words of the women I was speaking with in X [a LMIC], the partner in the global south becomes a kind of data collector.*

– University researcher

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Yet, even when they are co-authors, it can sometimes be tokenistic and done without genuinely opening up spaces for community members to shape the paper and discuss their intellectual property rights:

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*People with lived experience are now invited to co-author and they don't necessarily co-author - what they do is have their name stuck on a piece of paper that someone's already written, because it looks good. But those conversations about intellectual property rights don't happen.*

– Community partner

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Furthermore, when formal legal negotiations over intellectual property are had between universities, funders and partners, contracts often tend to favour the larger organisations by default. Frequently, small community organisations or academic partners in LMICs lack the legal resources to negotiate for their equal benefit.

## **2. LACK OF INVESTMENT IN LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT**

A persistent issue tied to inequity was the treatment of community partners as a means to an end rather than as valuable individuals whose skills and long-term development should be invested in. All of the community partners interviewed felt that little investment was put into upskilling or nurturing their capacities as individuals. As one community partner put it:

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*Do I only have worth as this kind of public contributor? Or do I have worth as a person in my own right? And actually, investing in me as an individual - is it something that people want to do to enable me to be the best that I can?*

– Community partner

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Community partners spoke of how they were not given opportunities to gain research skills or the support needed to understand research tasks. Some drew on their existing educational privileges, while others learnt along the way, requiring significant investments of their own time and money. This lack of support left them feeling overwhelmed and ill-equipped at times:

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*One of the biggest challenges is the self confidence that people need; the resilience that people need to actually carry on in a research project, or carry on being an assessor on a panel - there's not really that much support around to help the public to do that. So quite often people get imposter syndrome...I get that frequently*

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### **3. PROCESSES AREN'T DESIGNED FOR DIVERSE NEEDS**

All of the university researchers and research facilitators interviewed emphasised that inflexible and inappropriate finance processes amongst funders and universities, were a major barrier to working with community partners.

#### **3.1 Inflexible funding utilisation**

Often, university researchers encountered restrictions in utilising budgets flexibly (e.g. using funds for different activities or having contingency funds), which is frequently needed when partnering communities with varied and often changing needs. This made it difficult for them to fully co-create projects with communities as some had to turn down suggestions or new ideas from communities that did not fit with the original budget.

#### **3.2 Onerous and prejudicial payment requirements**

University finance processes are also often ill-suited to project and partner needs. To pay partners or hire them, finance processes often require partners to provide documentation (e.g. passports, right to work) that can be traumatic or prejudicial to marginalised communities. While finance processes may vary, community partners who had worked across multiple institutions emphasised their shared frustration with the onerous requirements that many had:

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*An increasing number of institutions want to do a right to work check, so they want you to show your passport, they want your National Insurance number... I just haven't taken payment on those occasions because I just refuse to engage with a process that is just plain wrong. And I think it's really gonna put off marginalized people*

*- Community partner*

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#### **3.3 Inappropriate ethics processes**

While many university researchers and community partners recognised the value of ethics review processes in providing an occasion for ethical reflection and accountability, they emphasised the fundamental incongruity between most ethics processes and the diverse, changing needs of communities. Ethics processes, being fixed to a singular point in time and requiring certainty in research activities, oftentimes made it difficult for university researchers to respond flexibly to communities:

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*Sometimes things come up in a process that maybe I had no way of anticipating might be a potential output, like the community group wants to make a video and that*

*wasn't part of my ethical approval. So then I come to an issue where either I stymie the co-creative process, or go through an entire further ethical review*

*– University researcher*

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Frequently, ethics requirements and forms were also ill-suited to the diverse backgrounds of communities. Consent forms filled with technical terms and requiring identification were cited as particularly alienating for illiterate, marginalised and vulnerable communities:

*All of the participants, we already explained the project to them, we gave them a copy of the consent form in Arabic..., no one read it. And I got: no, I don't want to sign it, but I will consent to everything. I don't want to sign my name because I associate signing my name, particularly for Syrians, with me being officially in Lebanon, and I don't want anyone to know I'm officially in Lebanon*

*– University researcher*

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Furthermore, community partners and university researchers often felt that ethics processes tended to be over-protective in their attempts to avoid institutional risk, stymieing community creativity and failing to appreciate their role as co-researchers rather than participants:

*There was a project that I'm involved in ... part of it is co-designing some rules and regulations with public contributors. And I had a big fight with the governance people who said that needs to go to the UREC. And I said: No, it doesn't, because we conflate participation and involvement. I don't need to be protected as a public contributor. I am part of the research team*

*- Community partner*

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Fundamentally, existing ethics processes

and requirements did not meet the central ethical concerns of researchers and community partners engaged in participatory social justice research. They failed to not only design for the diverse needs of communities, the diverse roles that community partners can play in research, and the diverse ways of working (e.g. via art, song, video) that may emerge from dynamic participatory relationships.

### **3.4 Ill-suited research outputs**

The failure of institutions to value and design for diversity is further evident in the rigidity and hierarchy of traditional research outputs. Often, peer-review journal publications remain the gold standard of research. Yet, their format, style and requirements are ill-suited to participatory research and inaccessible to most members of the public. Researchers noted that standard publications often lacked the space or flexibility of format to discuss participatory approaches in detail, undermining academic learning and awareness. Most publications also expect articles to be written in dense academic prose and require authors to provide academic credentials, making it difficult for community partners to not only contribute to papers but also to feel equally valued as non-academic authors.

Fundamentally, publications have not been designed to be read by members of the public, to encourage diverse contributors, or to meet the real-world needs of communities. This did not mean that the community partners we interviewed saw publications as futile. Rather, they believed that publications should be re-designed and/or that other research outputs should be equally if not more valued, according to the needs of the community:

*[The kind of research output] should really be decided with patients and the public contributors on the research team*

- Community partner

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*People want to see that research is not only going to make a difference in terms of the academic world, it has a real world application. So, if it's a piece of research on eating disorders, from that maybe there's some training and development opportunities for people working in eating disorders, services, maybe there's policy.*

- Community partner

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## 4. EXCLUSIONARY WAYS OF WORKING

Beyond the more overt exclusions faced in relation to finance, ethics and research outputs, community partners also emphasised the sense of alienation they felt in the built environment and everyday ways of working within research spaces. These social and material elements of academic life were often major barriers to self-worth and access.

A number of community partners spoke about feeling intimidated by the institutional offices and university buildings they attended meetings and funding panels at:

*Just the fact that you'd go to London, and they're normally in these really big old imposing posh buildings. You know, so you walk in, and everybody's dressed in a suit. And oh, gosh, it's so intimidating.*

- Community partner

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Others spoke about the frequent use of academic language in research conversations and meetings, which not only make it difficult to understand interactions but to feel comfortable enough to make one's voice heard:

*Quite often I struggle with the language that's used. I don't have time to look into all of it... And it can be hard work and*

*quite stressful to put that voice forward in discussions.*

- Community partner

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For community partners with care needs and long-term conditions, the significant amount of preparation required and long duration of meetings can also be exhausting and highly exclusionary. Conversations with community partners who review on funding panels make this clear:

*I've been a carer for my son for a long time...And the only work I ended up being able to do was casual work to fit in with his treatment and his time off school. And if you're doing casual work, and you're spending four days reading research papers [which is not compensated for], you can't then earn the money those days.*

- Community partner

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Another community partner emphasised how everyday styles of communicating in research often contribute to a sense of powerlessness and inferiority:

*Often, you don't even have a means of contacting, just an email. We use job titles, we make people feel like: oh, that's an early career researcher, this is a professor. And that power is really palpable and tangible in those spaces. And then if you're someone like me, like just lived experience, you feel: Oh, my God, what value am I bringing into this*

- Community partner

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# CHALLENGE THREE:

## SILOED WAYS OF WORKING

During interviews, researchers, research facilitators and community partners often expressed that the under-valuation of relationship-building, people, and diversity stemmed from a lack of understanding and dialogue within and between various sectors: within various disciplines in academia, within different funding organisations, between community partners and university researchers, between community partners and funders, and between university researchers and funders.

### 1. BARRIERS BETWEEN SECTORS

Community partners spoke of a lack of understanding between themselves and researchers:

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*I reflected that I'd become very siloed. In terms of, you know, these are the issues affecting me as a public contributor, and that's totally different. You know, researchers have all the power. But it was so interesting, because we were involved in that whole [research] process, seeing actually, the amount of time and effort... And you see the barriers*

– Community partner

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University researchers and research facilitators also noted the limited opportunities for dialogue between themselves and funders - this includes

national funding councils and philanthropic funding organisations. While some senior researchers had one-off conversations with funding organisations or occasional interactions, systematic dialogue that aimed to stimulate mutual learning and process improvement was largely absent. For many community partners, the opportunity to speak to funders in direct dialogue was even more remote. These siloed ways of working prevented mutual understanding, a convergence of values across sectors and co-production.

### 2. BARRIERS WITHIN SECTORS

Even within university research, interviewees stressed that a lack of common understanding and insufficient coordination across disciplines made it difficult to collectively advocate for the value of participatory social justice research.

Disciplinary silos often resulted in a lack of common understanding between citizen science, patient public involvement, and co-production. Rather than solidarity or constructive advice, researchers sometimes encountered resistance or misrecognition from academics advocating similar approaches:

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*This co-production proposal we put in...the whole thing was going to be co-produced and it's very open. And one of the reviewers*

*said: Oh, we're not really sure... where the PPI [Patient Public Involvement] element is in this? and I realised that they basically deemed co-production as not PPI*

*– University researcher*

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Furthermore, researchers often felt that there were multiple disciplines and institutions working within an area or community without any coordination of efforts or sharing of best practices. This made collective learning difficult, and often led to the duplication of efforts or mistakes:

*If you're not aware of what's already happened with a particular community, or the legacies and the context of each area you're working in, there's a danger of burdening the community*

*– University researcher*

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# CASE STUDY: THE LONDON PROSPERITY BOARD



To further evidence the importance of long-term funding in enabling cross-sectoral partnership, equality, and the development of new research pathways, this section presents a case study of the IGP's [London Prosperity Board](#) - an ongoing multi-sectoral partnership between the IGP, UCL East, central and local government, public agencies, businesses, the third sector, and local communities in east London. It details the trajectory of relationship-building that has emerged through the board's formation, and highlights the following key lesson:

**“Sustained investment in relationship-building is needed to foster equitable cross-sectoral partnerships from which meaningful research innovation and impact can emerge”**

**- Prof. Henrietta Moore**

# 1. PROSPERITY IN EAST LONDON: 2015 - 2016

2015 • Between **2015 - 2016**, the Institute for Global Prosperity (IGP) and London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) embarked on a joint research project titled “**Prosperity in east London**”, that sought to develop a new way of measuring prosperity designed by citizens and communities, based on local needs, aspirations and priorities. The project emerged from exploratory conversations between LLDC and Dr Saffron Woodcraft, as part of her PhD fieldwork (2013-2016), as well as the relationships she had previously built with local councils and communities through research at The Young Foundation and Social Life exploring the impacts of regeneration on local communities. Members of the community in east London were trained as citizen social scientists to develop and design this project, which involved over 250 interviews and conversations with people living in Hackney Wick, East Village in the Olympic Park, and Forest Gate in Stratford.



2016 • Recognising that new citizen-led prosperity metrics must be embedded in partnership and policy-making frameworks to meaningfully enable change, the IGP established the **London Prosperity Board (LPB)** in **2016**. The LPB is an innovative, cross-sector partnership involving stakeholders with an interest in the prosperity of communities in east London including: community-based organisations, citizen scientists, LLDC, 5 east London Boroughs, Greater London Authority, Office for National Statistics, and private sector partners. The LPB meets every quarter to discuss directions for enabling prosperity on local terms and strategies for embedding this into policy and practice. Work on developing and establishing the LPB was underwritten by the IGP with a small grant from the Bartlett Innovation Fund.



## 2. PROSPERITY IN EAST LONDON: 2017 - 2021

2017 • Between **2017 - 2018**, the LPB drew on the local model for prosperity developed during the 2015 - 2016 PiEL project to pilot the UK's first citizen-led [Prosperity Index](#). Citizen social scientists carried out more interviews in east London to understand local definitions of and barriers to prosperity. Alongside this, the IGP commissioned a survey of 750 households in these neighbourhoods to measure levels of prosperity based on the priorities people identified. The metric development, interviews, citizen scientists' time and household survey were funded by a £100,000 grant from the JP Morgan Foundation. The IGP researchers' time dedicated to project management, citizen science training, data analytics, and managing the LPB.



2019 • Recognising the value of the Prosperity Index, the LPB jointly developed a longitudinal study examining the long-term effects of rapid social, economic and physical changes on household prosperity in east London. Between **2019 - 2021**, the LPB worked together to co-produce research questions, identify research sites, develop a sampling strategy, and refine the household survey questionnaire. The IGP led efforts to secure long-term funding for the [Prosperity in east London Longitudinal Study \(PiEL 2021-2031\)](#) while LPB members invested significant financial and in-kind resources: Royal Docks, Lendlease, LLDC, Hill Group, Poplar HARCA, and the London Boroughs of Hackney, Waltham Forest, and Barking and Dagenham committed to funding a total of £263,000. The time and effort that went into project management, fund-raising and sustaining relationships within the LPB was underwritten by the IGP, without grant funding.



2021 • In 2021, the **Prosperity in east London Longitudinal Study 2021 - 2031** was launched. Research council funding is still being sought to build the study's data analytics capacity.



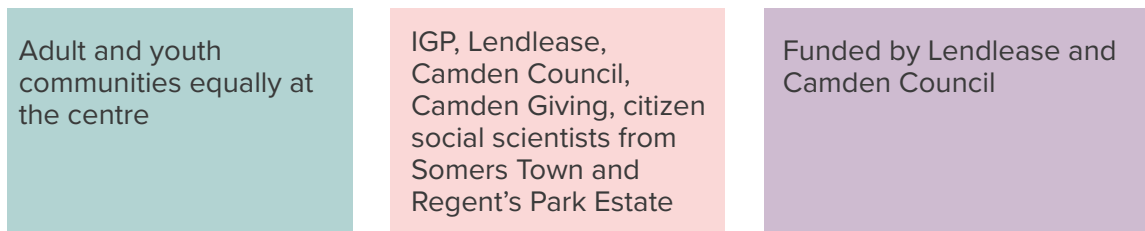
### 3. EMERGENT PATHS: CITIZEN SCIENCE

The establishment of the LPB in 2016 and development of the London Prosperity Index, launched in 2019, facilitated the emergence of multiple new ways of thinking and working, novel relationships, and pathways to change. These coalesced broadly around 3 major areas: Citizen Science, Secure Livelihoods and Youth Prosperity. This section focuses on work that emerged around Citizen Science.

2018 ● In 2018, the Citizen Science Working Group in east London was formed as a sub-group of the LPB, to think about evidencing and embedding citizen science in research and policy-making. As part of their work, they created a Citizen Science Charter - a code of practice for organisations wanting to work with, commission, or employ citizen scientists



2019 ● Having seen the fruits of citizen-led research through the 2019 east London Prosperity Index, Camden Council worked with the IGP, Lendlease, Camden Giving, adults and young people in Euston to develop their own model of prosperity under the [Good Life Euston](#) project. This is now being translated into metrics to underpin regeneration planning in Euston.

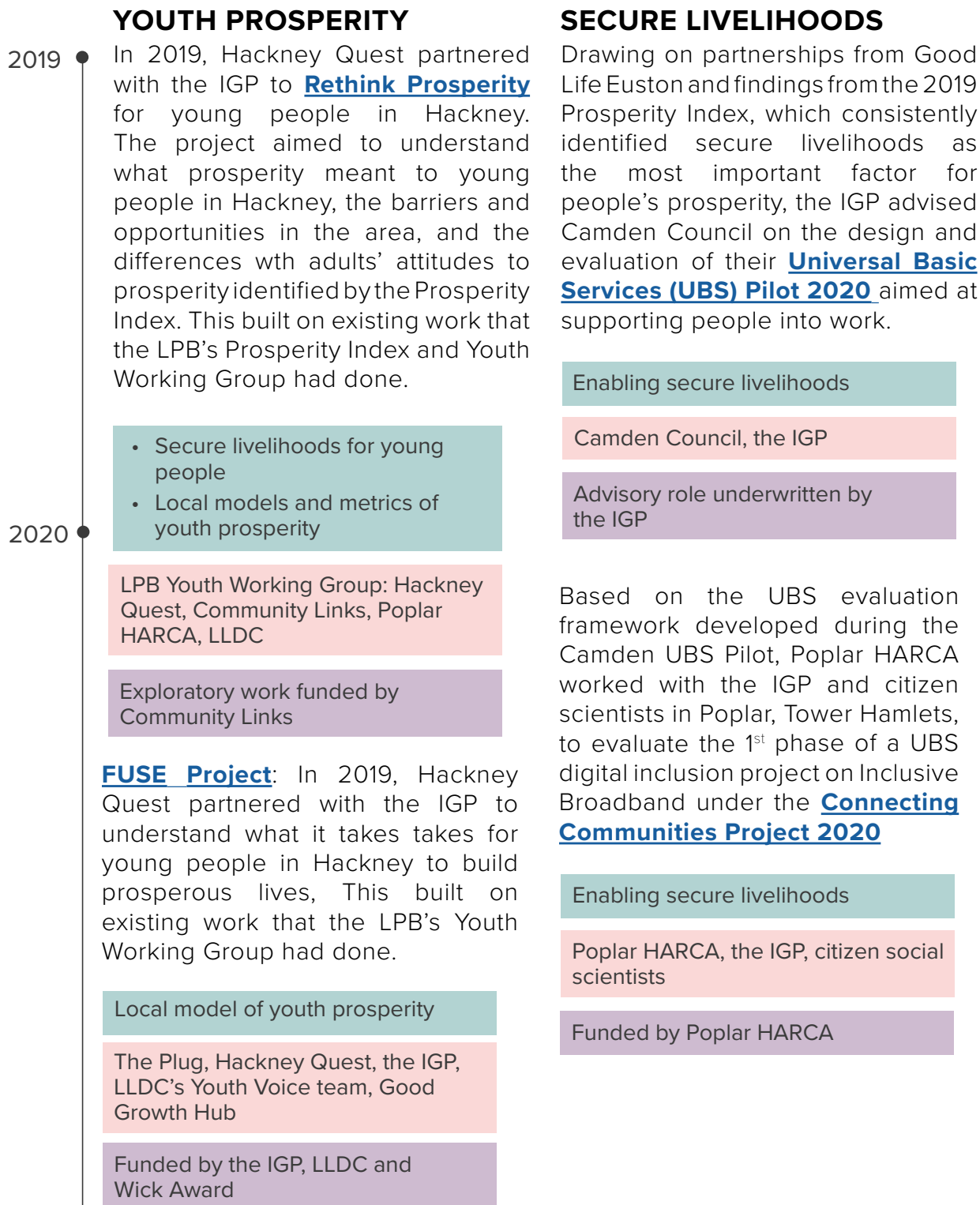


2021 ● In 2021, the [Citizen Science Academy](#) was formed to make participation in research inclusive and accessible. It aims to develop rigorous education and training programmes that are 'applied' to active research projects, and are delivered in community-based settings. The Citizen Science Academy launched its first programme in 2021, linked to the Prosperity in east London 2021-2031 study. 11 residents from different parts of east London completed citizen social science training and collected qualitative data about obstacles to prosperity in their neighbourhoods.



## 4. EMERGENT PATHS: YOUTH PROSPERITY & SECURE LIVELIHOODS

This section focuses on work that emerged from the LPB, around Youth Prosperity and Secure Livelihoods:



# RECOMMENDATIONS: FOR FUNDERS

## 1. CO-DEVELOP A SET OF CORE VALUES WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

They will help in reaching a shared understanding as to aims of a group who are working together, and should guide the redesign of structures and processes. As the Co-production Collective's research on the "[Value of Co-production](#)" reveals, the values at the heart of participatory approaches distinguish it from other "methods", and are important to get right. To ensure these values remain central, community members should also be embedded in the governance of funding organisations (e.g. on boards and steering committees).

## 2. PLACE COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE OF DECISION-MAKING

Echoing the Young Foundation's Institute for Community Studies (ICS) and UK Research & Innovation's (UKRI) report on "[An equitable future for research](#)", funders should allow community organisations to be lead funding recipients and place community members in decision-making roles over funding - from priority-setting to funding criteria and application review.

## 3. FOSTER RESPONSIBILITY

Funders can implement community-centred reporting procedures such as regular check-ins with communities to identify if funded projects adhere to their participatory commitments. This provides a feedback mechanism for communities and funders to hold researchers accountable.

## 4. ENSURE FUNDING IS MORE 'RELATIONAL'

Further echoing the ICS and UKRI's report, we recommend that funders make applications more accessible (e.g. posting funding calls

in local languages, providing training or support for community partners to apply) and make funding more flexible (e.g. agreeing different ways 'impact' can be demonstrated, allowing for contingency funds, and being open to changing time-scales or changes in funding utilisation).

## 5. OFFER DIVERSE AND LONGER-TERM FUNDING

Different funding timescales and models are needed to meet the diverse needs of participatory projects. This includes more funding for the initial stage of idea development and exploration (e.g. "test and learn" models, pilots), as well as for capacity-building (e.g. training programmes) and further relationship-building (e.g. engagement funds, network funds). Various funding timescales are also needed, in particular, longer-term funding to support meaningful partnership-building. In a similar way to start-up accelerators, organisations can develop long-term programmes that support cohorts of community partners and researchers throughout the key stages of partnership development.

## 7. SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESEARCH CAREERS

Provide funding for community partners to work in collaboration with universities to develop their careers, not only through training and upskilling but also dedicated scholarship programmes (e.g. community research fellowships that value and enable "braided" careers)

## 8. FORM A CROSS-SECTORAL CHANGE NETWORK

To think practically about how to enact institutional redesign and facilitate learning and mentorship between researchers, community partners, and funders.

# RECOMMENDATIONS: FOR UNIVERSITIES

## 1. CO-DEVELOP A SET OF CORE VALUES WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

These should guide the redesign of university structures, processes and future planning. To ensure these values remain central, community members should also be embedded in university governance.

## 2. PLACE COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE OF DECISION-MAKING

Communities should hold decision-making roles in leadership bodies for research and innovation, education, building design, and planning. Having community partners on steering committees may be a helpful starting point.

## 3. DESIGN A PRINCIPLE-BASED ETHICS PROCESS THAT CENTRES EQUITY AND JUSTICE, IS RELATIONAL, AND IS LOCALLY-RELEVANT

**Principle-based:** researchers and research committees need to consider the principles and intentions that lead research work. This should form the baseline of ethical assessment and may require novel tools for reflection and evaluation, such as ethics interviews or ethics discussion panels instead of, or in addition to, form-based applications.

**Iterative and relational:** As relationships unfold, new knowledge emerges and communities change, regular ethics check-ins are needed. In a similar way to data management committees in clinical trials, ethics management committees should be set up to regularly pose core ethical questions, ensure research teams keep to their values, and provoke change where needed.

**Centres equity & justice:** questions regarding equity and justice should be included in ethics review forms and processes

**Locally-relevant:** ethics committees should include community members with relevant lived experience, who can interrogate localised ways in which equity and power might play out. Ethics forms and processes also need to be made relevant and accessible to local communities.

## 4. ENSURE FINANCE PROCESSES ARE FLEXIBLE & RELATIONAL

Where possible, this should include allowing for one-off payments, allowing flexibility in disbursing funds, removing requirements for onerous documentation and speeding up payment for community partners who often face thin margins or financially precarious situations.

## 5. MAKE LEGAL PROCESSES MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

Legal teams can start by being transparent in negotiations, explaining in easily understandable terms the implications of agreements to community partners who often lack their own legal representation. In addition, legal agreements should fairly value the needs and contributions of community partners by default, without researchers or communities having to advocate for it.

## 6. RECOGNISE IMPACT AND VALUE MORE BROADLY

Academic recognition, teaching, and leadership opportunities should assess individuals based on their contributions to impact markers that are co-defined with communities, beneficial to all, and iterative. This means that impact markers or metrics should be determined through an ongoing conversation with communities, and might

include the production of community-relevant outputs such as policy papers, advocacy events, programmes, and spatial interventions. A joint community-and-academic review process similar to the traditional academic peer review process can help in assessing this.

Recognising value more broadly also means enabling “braided” or community research careers by offering educational and career opportunities.

## **7. FACILITATE PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN UNIVERSITY LEARNING AND TEACHING**

This includes teaching students approaches to participatory social justice research and creating opportunities for student-community participatory projects, as well as inviting community partners to teach in seminars, conferences, and as lecturers.

## **8. FORM COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

Establish change networks to think practically about how to enact institutional redesign and create mentorship programmes for participatory social justice research. These programmes could facilitate the pairing of new community partners or early career researchers with senior researchers and experienced community partners.

## CONTACT US

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/grand-challenges/about/contact-us>

 @GrandChallenges

[coproduction@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:coproduction@ucl.ac.uk)

 @UCL\_CoPro

[coproduction@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:coproduction@ucl.ac.uk)

 @IOE\_London

[igp@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:igp@ucl.ac.uk)

 @glo\_pro