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Sustainable Communities: University-Community Partnership Research on Social Dimensions of Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the role that university research can play in sustainable development at the level of community. The methodological approach is action research undertaken in collaboration with voluntary and community organisations, addressing their needs and including high levels of participation. An outline of the nature of sustainable communities and engaged university research, is followed by case examples of five collaborative research projects, each generating different types of qualitative data which inform sustainable development of communities in diverse ways. The studies indicate that university-community partnerships can provide understanding of the challenges facing people in communities; encourage innovative local action for sustainability; and contribute to policy development at different levels. They do this via the creation of ecological 'edges'. The challenges facing universities doing this kind of research are highlighted.

1 Introduction

Economic, social and environmental factors, taken in their cultural context constitute the three pillars of sustainability. In this paper we consider the role of universities in contributing to the socio economic elements of sustainability via their community partnership research, framed in particular, by the concept of sustainable *communities*.

We will draw on five examples of our own research praxis to understand, promote and transform social aspects of sustainability at community level – sustainable communities. A focus on sustainable communities is a crucial part of wider sustainable development, as it is only by problematising neoliberalism and its negative structural effects on *communities*(Coburn, 2004)that the vision of a sustainable future can be fully realised. The implications of our research for university-community research partnerships for sustainable development at community level will be discussed in terms of creating and working at the ecological 'edge'.

HEFCE, the higher education funding body, has a strategy for sustainable development, applied to all aspects of university activity, including research (HEFCE, 2014). It is worth noting that although the HEFCE strategy is for sustainable development, in their vision they refer to sustainability. This is an important distinction, as one of the things that university thinking and practice can do is to problemmatise the very notion of sustainable **development**. In terms of sustainable communities the process of *development* (as in community development; community organising and so on) remains important. However, when we set sustainable communities alongside those economic and environmental elements of sustainability, a different picture emerges. *Development*, and all that it implies in terms of advanced capitalism, which by its very nature depends on the extraction and allocation of limited natural resources, thereby jeopardising the natural environment, has to be challenged. Indeed the role of university based, intellectual endeavour in foregrounding the socio economic interdependence between neoliberalism (the role of the markets), consumerism (market agency) and sustainability (the relationship between the agent, the market and resource allocation) is gaining ground (see for example the collection by D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis, 2014).

2 Sustainable Communities

In the UK, the concept of sustainable communities preceded the 2008 economic crash and emerged from a Government sponsored Sustainable Development Commission. It coincided with the growth of concern for environmental degradation, climate change and the need to reduce carbon emissions and was precipitated by the recognition of a housing crisis which threatened the viability of neighbourhoods (Power, 2004). Sustainable communities are those which

> *meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, their children and other users, contribute to a high quality of life and provide opportunity and choice. They achieve this in ways that make effective use of natural resources, enhance the environment, promote social cohesion and inclusion and strengthen economic prosperity.* (Egan 2004:18)

Whilst all communities differ in terms of their specific circumstance in time and place, sustainable communities are places that embody the principles of sustainable development insofar as they

- *Balance and integrate the social, economic and environmental components of their community*

- *Meet the needs of existing and future generations*
- *Respect the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally also to make their communities sustainable* (Geographical Association, 2015)

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future, meeting the diverse needs of existing and future residents within the wider context of economic and environmental security. They are safe, inclusive and cohesive, strong in social capital and offering opportunities for participation in decisions and governance; they enable human flourishing and wellbeing, are well served, well connected and fair for everyone; they have strong community and voluntary associations and are knowledgeable about and sensitive to protection of the environment (see Coote, 2015).

Egan (2004:19) summed up the key dimensions of sustainable communities in a diagram, adapted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Dimensions of sustainable communities (adapted from Egan, 2004)
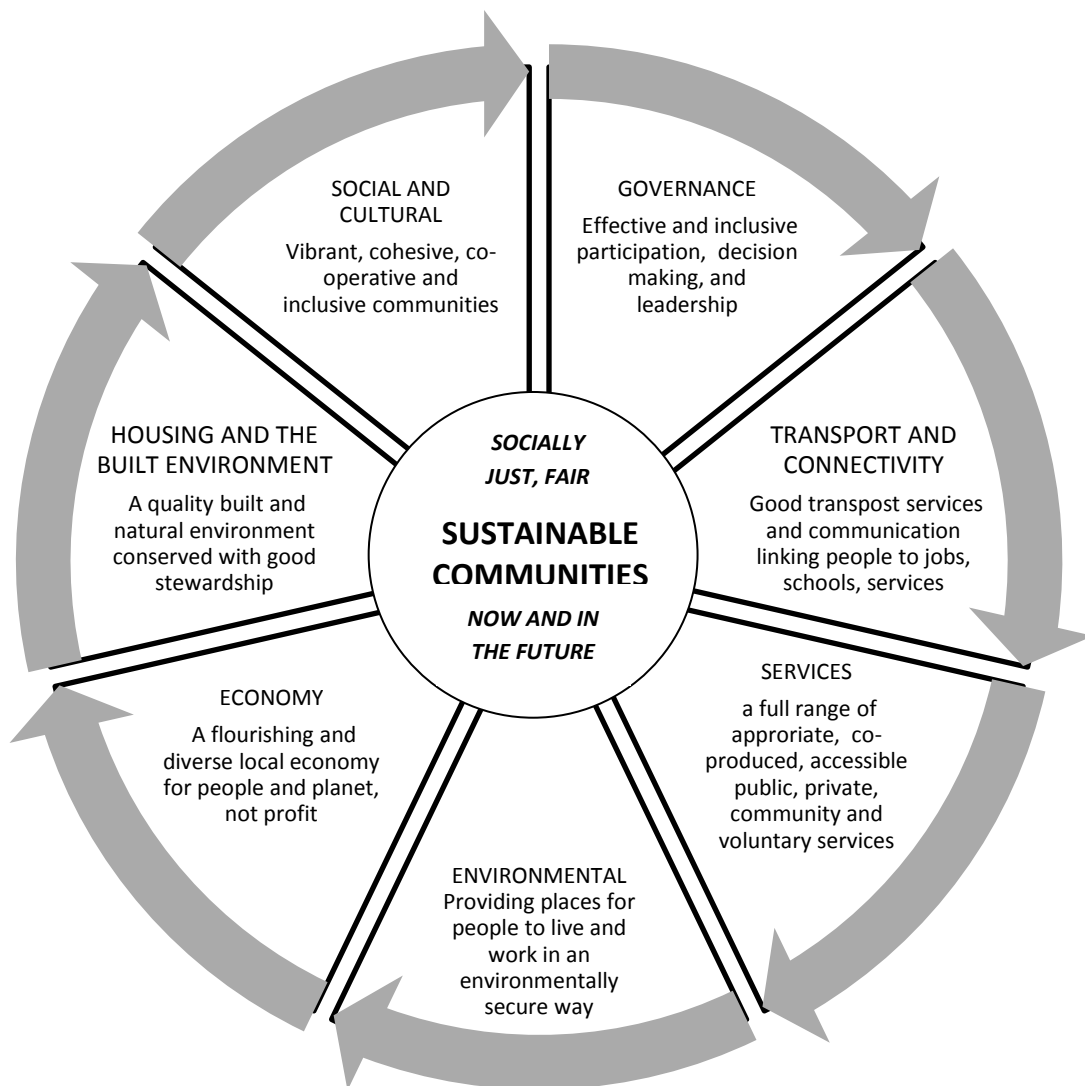
The social and cultural dimensions envision sustainable communities that support: a sense of community identity and belonging; tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, background and beliefs; friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in neighbourhoods; and social inclusion and good life chances for all.

Good governance leads to sustainable communities that are well run and enjoy: representative, accountable governance systems which enable inclusive, active and effective participation; effective engagement with the community at neighbourhood level, including capacity building to develop the community's skills, knowledge and confidence; strong, informed and effective partnerships; a strong, inclusive, community and voluntary sector; and sense of civic values, responsibility and pride.

Well served sustainable communities enable people to reach their potential through: a good range of accessible, affordable, integrated and high quality public, community, voluntary and private services; service providers who think and act long-term and beyond their own immediate geographical and interest boundaries, and who involve users and local residents in shaping and co-producing their policies and practice.

A flourishing and diverse local economy leads to thriving sustainable communities featuring: a wide range of jobs and training opportunities; local work opportunities that offer opportunities for life-long learning; dynamic social enterprise and business creation, with benefits for the local community – as focus on people not profit; a strong business community with links into the wider economy; and economically viable and attractive town centres.

The interdepartmental, coordinated policy arena of sustainable communities has gone off the political boil in the UK. Support for communities is the responsibility of the Department of Communities and Local Government, whilst the sustainable development agenda lies with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with a focus almost exclusively on the environment. Despite this fragmentation, the dimensions of sustainable communities remain an important cluster of priorities for the wider sustainability agenda and Bichard (2014), for example, illustrates the ways in which some communities have made progress towards sustainability, of alternative ways of living and co-operating through the building of community capacity and nurturance of the environment. It is at the community level of sustainability that many of the actions needed for sustainable futures will be implemented.

The research we report here talks to social justice and fairness, as well as to the social and cultural, governance, services, and economic dimensions of sustainable communities. Each of the examples is also an example of university-community partnership research.

3 The research approach
The research we are reporting is collaborative, born of strong university-community partnerships.

3.1 University community partnership research

Formal and informal partnerships between universities and the community and voluntary sector generally falls under the umbrella of public engagement, a broad set of activities characteristic of an engaged university (NCCPE, 2015).

These partnerships range from local, specific partnerships to inter-agency strategic partnerships, to networked partnerships linking projects or agencies (Kagan and Duggan, 2009). The key features of our partnerships are that they are characterised by:

- Being values led
- Starting with the concerns of the community or voluntary organisation
- Highlighting the identification of assets and capacity building
- Achieving reciprocity and attention to power issues
- Ensuring participation, inclusion and engagement
- Adopting a systems approach that reflects a multi-layered understanding to change

These partnerships can help communities move towards more sustainable futures, become more resilient and enhance the wellbeing of those who work and live in them[1]

3.2 Action Research and the identification of research needs

The research approach in all the case examples was action research, with high levels of participation where possible (Kagan, Burton and Siddiquee, 2008). Action research is a process and methodological approach rather than a methodology per se. Each of our examples addresses a need identified by our community partners for research which will enhance their sustainability journeys, and different kinds of qualitative data were collected and analysed through a variety of methods. Table 1 summarises the research undertaken.

Table.1: Research Needs, Data and Analysis of Case Examples

	Case example	Research Need of Community Partner	Type of data collected	Method of analysis
1	Forced Labour and Chinese Migrant Workers	To understand the drivers and consequences of forced labour in order to provide appropriate services to undocumented workers	Interview accounts (conducted in Chinese and translated)	Thematic and narrative analyses
2	Resilience and Disabled People	To understand and work with disabled people to build resilience and support inclusion	Personal accounts; observation; interviews; focus group	Life Story analysis; thematic analysis; toolkit testing
3	Capacity Building for Sustainable Communities	District wide concern about how to enhance participation in governance and build capacity for participation and inclusion	Policy analysis; ethnographic data	Case study
4	Sustainable African	To map the challenges facing African Diaspora community	Ethnographic participant observation;	Organisational case studies

		organisations and develop capacity for enterprise development	document records; meetings; interviews	
	Diaspora enterprises			
5	Evaluation of Volunteers supporting vulnerable families	To understand the impact of volunteering expertise and time to enable stronger community cohesion and more appropriate services	Participant observation; focus groups; telephone and face to face interviews, questionnaire	Thematic analysis based on objectives of the organisation

The qualitative approach was not exploratory, but rather a way of tapping into deep meaning for participants, and dealing with complexity in their lives.

4 Case Examples

The research we are reporting is collaborative, underpinned by strong ethics of partnership working, reciprocity, stewardship and a commitment to sustainable development. Our community partners are actively trying to build communities that support human flourishing. The case studies offered here illustrate just some of the possibilities for such research.

4.1 Forced Labour and Migrant Chinese Workers.

Globalisation has led to an increase in migratory flows as people in areas of poverty and worklessness seek work away from home, in order to support their families. This has led to a complex web of workers, travel facilitators and people traffickers, gangmasters and employers, in which migrant workers can be caught up in situations of forced labour and vulnerable work in communities in the host country. This link from the global to the local undermines the sustainability of communities by putting strain on local employment opportunities, weakening community cohesion and threatening peoples sense of belonging and identity.

We worked with a local voluntary organisation that offered services to and supported Chinese people living in the North West of England: they had noticed an increase in undocumented workers, who spoke little English and were often living and working in very vulnerable situations. They had no access to public services and were unable to exercise employment rights to decent working conditions. We were commissioned by a social policy funding body to use a co-researcher approach to design, implement and analyse research data in the UK (Kagan et al.,2011b; Lawthom et al., 2015). We collected accounts of Chinese migrant workers' experiences of travelling to the UK, often by circuitous routes and usually entering the UK without relevant papers (although some had come on some kind of visa which they then overstayed); of finding work and of working conditions. We explored the role that family, either in China or in the UK had played in the decisions people made. It was clear that people made active decisions to travel and to stay in particular jobs or not, linked closely to their responsibilities to their families. They were working in precarious situations, paid well below the minimum wage, with long working hours, no holidays or sick pay and frequently bullying in the workplace. They were unable to participate in their local communities due to

little leisure time, lack of speaking English and a lack of confidence due to their unauthorised status. Most of the people we spoke to had made applications to remain the UK, either through the asylum system (which they did not understand) or through other immigration channels. Our study was one in a programme of studies that informed the development of new legislation, the Modern Slavery Act, 2015.

The knowledge gained from the study addressed sustainable communities in a number of ways. It:

- strengthened the capacity of the voluntary organisation we collaborated with to develop services (such as English classes) to support migrants and help them participate in their local communities and gain a sense of belonging in their new countries;
- exposed the workings of an 'alternative economy in which employers exploited migrant workers, reducing the availability of decent jobs and thereby economic viability;
- revealed some of the ways in which global labour chains and precarious status weakens and undermines sustainable communities in both communities of origin and host communities and thus the unfairness of the migratory labour system;

4.2 Disabled people and resilience across the life course.

In times of increasing austerity in the United Kingdom, the underpinning rhetoric is often given a sustainability angle, in that metaphors of balancing and resilience are drawn upon to justify cuts. Within this austere climate, marginalised groups are often more vulnerable and 'at risk' from the impact of cuts and this in turn stands to threaten the stability of cohesion within communities. A leading disability charity was keen to investigate how disabled people demonstrated resilience across the life course, and how best to build resilience amongst different groups of disabled people. This led to a partnership between researchers from a university in the north-west of the UK and the charity (https://disabilityresilience.wordpress.com) to carry out the relevant research (Runswick-Cole and Goodley, 2013). In our definition (in line with Ungar, 2011) we positioned the resilience of disabled people as being linked to sustainability, both of relationships and communities, and not the individual traits or coping skills of individuals.   Rather than seeing resilience as being a property of individuals, it is, instead, derived from the *networks* of material resource, relationships with people and participation in communities.

The research consisted of phases including a life story approach, a 'community of practice' analysis and the development of a toolkit. The partnership between the university and the charity was further enhanced by a reference group of disabled people who participated in and advised the project.

The project yielded rich information which made justice and resource distribution key to understanding disability and resilience. The complex relationships between resource

allocation, power and identity of disabled people were illustrated by the life stories. They showed that:

- networks afforded disabled people are inextricably linked to welfare benefits, accessibility of transport and social systems;
- health and social care systems were positioned as sites of struggle for resources that were needed to create resilience (or not);
- advocacy and social justice were reference points for disabled people (across the life course) to become and remain members of the community; and
- resilience is a relational, social, community and networked phenomenon which requires resources, and coordinated services to develop and support networks that respond to community members' needs, at different points in life

Through the research we developed a community of practice consisting of disabled people, academics, practitioners, young people and parents/carers to both generate new ways of thinking and in itself help build resilience. This co-researcher approach creatively engaged and shared knowledge, and underlined the value of peer support and the importance of place in building networks of resilience. As part of the research we developed a participative and accessible toolkit which was taken up by the organization to use with their membership and stakeholder groups.

The knowledge gained from the study addressed sustainable communities in a number of ways. It:

- strengthened the capacity of the partner voluntary organisation to work with disabled people to co-produce knowledge and to develop good health and social care services supporting the development of networks which form the foundation of resilience and participation;
- provided an example of good practice in strengthening the social and cultural inclusion of disabled people in everyday life and exposed some of the obstacles to inclusion at different life stages
- contributed to capacity building and new practices, enabling disabled people to make active and positive contributions, strengthening participation, respect and community cohesion.

4.3 Capacity building for sustainable communities.

Universities are well placed to examine the impact of policy on communities and to communicate lessons from this. They are also there for the long haul: able to pick up threads from research findings and apply them to new situations of different communities. Community development, renewal, and regeneration have featured in public policy indifferent forms for decades. Diamond (2004) showed how whilst the language might change, the underlying conceptual thinking and social goals remain remarkably similar and the gaps between the policy goals (for localisim, partnership working and sustainable

development) and the reality on the ground are shared. He compared approaches to neighbourhood regeneration in two large cities in the UK and found that the ways in which regeneration partnership schemes operated meant that local people were defined as 'dependent' and that local agencies tended to marginalise alternative views. Furthermore, local partnerships, dominated by the local authorities, sought to co-opt local activists and individualise, rather than collectivise the experience of local communities. Diamond was able to identify ways in which local people could participate in governance of their communities in more meaningful ways.

An alliance was formed, some years later, with community residents of another local authority. There, a programme of participatory action research was agreed, with the social justice goal, to enable action; and the social justice functions of attending to power relationships, being non-extractive fully collaborative, and involving research participants in the research process (Goldstraw et al., 2015: 9). In this research, university researchers working with community residents have introduced a programme of capacity building and community leadership, to enable residents to act as advocates, mentors or buddies to other residents experiencing difficulties (Diamond 2012). The training has at its core reflective thinking, and those residents who develop the interest and confidence to do so, go on to undertake small community based pieces of research, supported by university researchers. The kinds of research projects they have undertaken include: the recovery of social and cultural memory via a social history project about poverty in the area; experiences of residents in receipt of welfare benefits, culminating in a radio play, giving voice to those who are usually silenced; research into the advocacy work of the community group and the effect of volunteering on both volunteers and 'clients'; and the development of a piece of community drama about the researched experiences of, and involving older people living in the area in receipt of benefits. Taken as a whole, this programme of research includes policy critique and action research in the area of capacity building for community involvement in governance and the more effective delivery of services.

The knowledge gained from the study addressed sustainable communities in a number of ways. It:

- enhanced understanding of, and ways of developing community involvement in governance;
- encouraged effective engagement with community residents, building their capacity for community leadership incorporating skills of enquiry and critical reflection, advocacy and research and enhancing their skills, knowledge and confidence;
- facilitated a strong sense of community and belonging, tolerance, respect and co-operative behaviour in neighbourhoods

4.4 Sustainable African Diaspora community enterprises.

We have been engaged in an action research project involving local grassroots black and ethnic minority communities, whohave been shown to be disproportionately affected by welfare reforms and cuts to local services(Khan, 2015). An extensive programme of consultation and support, building relationships with local African Diaspora community

groups has evolved. One part of this process was the support we were able to give to a local campaign to save an African Caribbean community centre, which was ultimately unsuccessful. Nevertheless, during the campaign we were able to galvanise local communities to think about the services and sustainable enterprises they wanted in the building and to develop a network of local agencies. What this stage of the research revealed, was the structural challenges that African Diaspora communities (in particular) face in protecting and sustaining their local community assets.

As a result of our partnership building during the campaign, we worked with local and voluntary sector support and capacity building organisations, one of which commissioned wider, national research into community asset mapping and the black and ethnic minority communities. We held a reception in the university for the dissemination of the research, which affirmed the widespread structural challenges facing African Diaspora groups and the "insecurities facing many BAME-led organisations trying to safeguard community assets"(Field, et al., 2015, p. 6).These challenges include trying to secure grants/council funding, trying to win council or public sector contracts via local authority micro commissioning and also trying to win contracts for council asset transfers.

A new partnership was formed with the London based group that conducted the research, in order to co-facilitate a newly formed BAME enterprise forum to examine these issues of sustainability more locally in Manchester, especially in the context of major regional policy developments linked to regional devolution (known popularly as DevoManc and the Northern Powerhouse initiative). Members of the forum are engaged in various forms of action, which we are following, reporting and informing subsequent actions. Here are two brief case examples of the forum support that we are giving to community enterprises that are specifically engaging with the sustainability agenda, as outlined earlier.

Waste Not is a small Ghanaian-owned community recycling collects donations of children's 'pre-loved' and unwanted new or used items, such as pens, pencils, clothes, toys, calculators, books. The company sends the donated items to support young mothers and families who need them. The company also sends its donated items to Ghana to support nursery and primary school libraries, and contributes to humanitarian agencies that support refugee camps and orphanages. Our partnership work with *Waste Not* has helped identify their capacity building needs and helping them think about the most effective governance structure for their future progress.

Project Hermes is a community wifi initiative run by the *The Mbari Group,* an activist collective. They initiate and support projects that explore and address social and cultural equity. They use the Arts, community building, history, politics, the environment, economics and technology in their practice. They are working on building a free wifi access to a local housing estate. We are currently exploring the possibility of using wifi extenders to extend our university's public wifi access to the housing estate. We are also working with a Telecoms provider who has had previous experience of the benefits of providing free wifi for other local deprived communities (Dawood, 2013).

Through this multi-dimensional action research process we are informing sustainable communities by:

- enhanced understanding of the structural barriers to effective participation and inclusion by marginalised African Diaspora groups;

- building on and growing partnerships bringing expertise to contribute to the capacity building of local community social enterprises;
- facilitated a strong sense of community and belonging, tolerance, respect and co-operative behaviour

4.5 Evaluation of Project Supporting Marginalised and Vulnerable Families

A multi-professional team of researchers from the university worked in partnership with a local voluntary organisation, Home Start, to evaluate their services across a number of urban areas (O'Neill et al., 2014). The aim was to identify ways in which they could improve their support for families and demonstrate their impact for funders.

The Home Start model is centred on targeted, local volunteer support for families experiencing difficult in the UK and in other countries too. Isolated, struggling parents, trying to do their best, often living poverty, severed from extended family support, find it difficult to participate fully in their communities, and all family members are under stress and fall short of realising their potential. Families are referred to the service by professionals including health visitors, teachers, social workers and can also self-refer. Volunteers, who themselves have been parents, are sought from the local community and are matched with families. They undertake training including child development, signposting to services and child protection (or safeguarding). They then provide whatever help and support is needed in the domestic space for one of two hours per week.

We worked in close partnership with the organisation to develop the most appropriated research design, reaching all stakeholders. We undertook focus groups with volunteers, participant observation at meetings and training events, interviews with families and trustees, as well as an online questionnaire for referrers. At the heart of the research was the parents' and volunteers' experiences of being involved. It was clear that parents found the volunteers' support beneficial and it enabled them to cope with difficult times: it helped them increase their confidence and find a renewed sense of purpose. The volunteers told us about how their views of struggling families had changed and they were now able to advocate for families experiencing difficulties. They provided a range of social and practical support for the parents, and, crucially, as they were neither a professional nor a friend were seen as people they could trust and talk with openly. The research was funded by Manchester Metropolitan University and has been extended, with a PhD studentship, to examine the family support model, nationally, in the context of austerity.

In undertaking the evaluation, we addressed sustainable communities in these ways:

- Strengthen the capacity of the voluntary organisation's ability to provide appropriate and inclusive support to local families;
- Show how sharing of time and expertise and activities could reduce stigmatisation and build local social capital;

- Demonstrate the role the university could play, as a community anchor organisation, in strengthening the voluntary sector
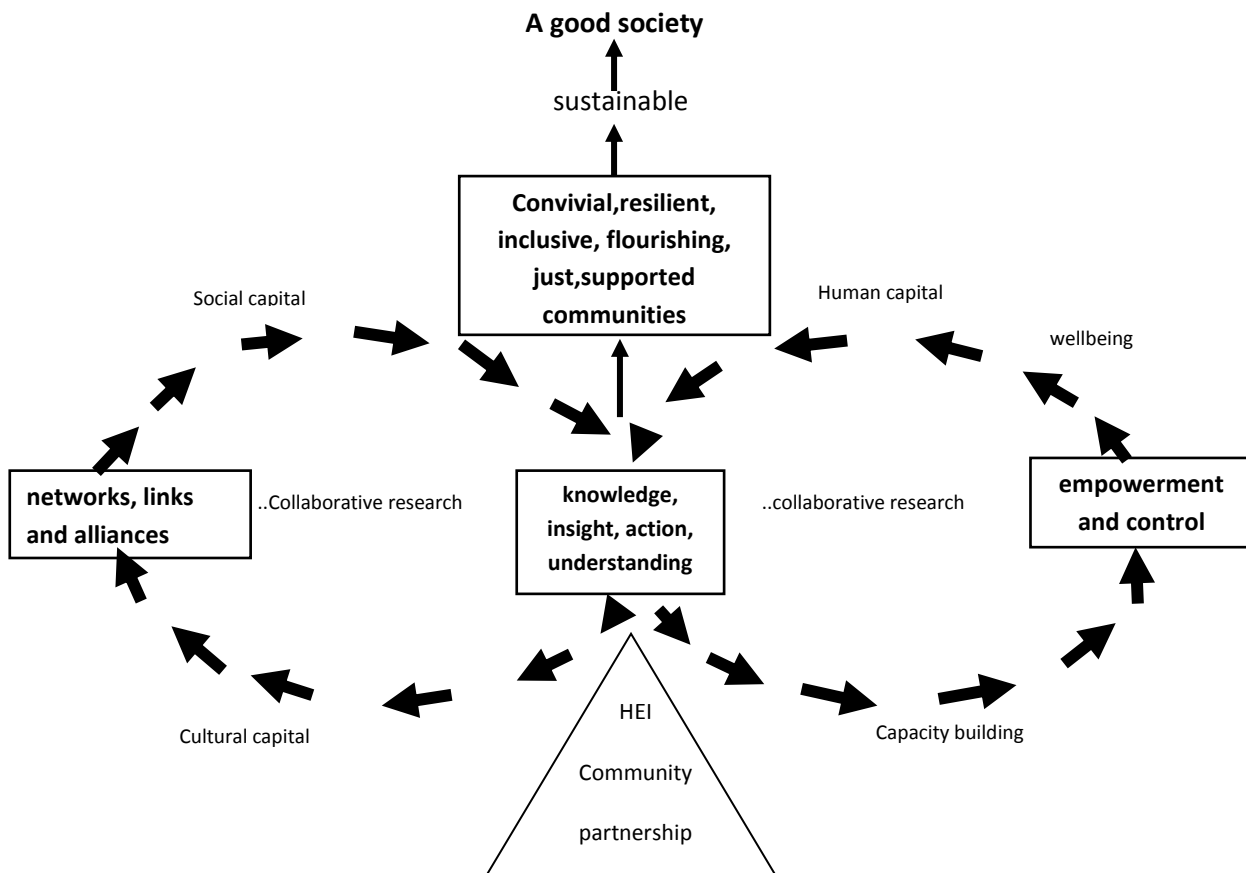
5 Discussion

These projects have worked in one way or another to build networks and alliances and increase empowerment. They have done this through complex working to strengthen: insight and identities through building organisational capacity; human, cultural and social capital; and wellbeing. They have only been able to do this through the operation of coherent and well managed collaborative research partnerships. In so doing, they have contributed to sustainable communities that are fair, harmonious and inclusive, well run, with good quality services, a flourishing economy and sensitive to the environment. The co-produced knowledge, insight, action and understanding is central to the transformation process and is what distinguishes research for sustainable development from other change processes.

All of the case examples were of participative research. Community partners identified the need, and participated in the design, implementation and interpretation of findings. They are not short term 'cut and run' projects, but build on relationships formed over a number of years, often with excluded groups, and which continue beyond the specific project. Such partnerships are difficult to form and sustain from a university base, as partnership working is rarely factored in to workloads. Constant vigilance and pressure is required to ensure that university systems – local and central enable rather than obstruct this kind of research. One of the pressures on the university researchers is to ensure that in addition to benefits for the community partners, engaged research also meets the needs of the university (and the assessments of research excellence that take place nationally). Whilst this is not always easy, there is a requirement to produce impact case studies (HEFCE, 2015), and one kind of impact might be the contribution made to the development of sustainable communities.

All of the projects have interfaced with local, national or global policies. They have both informed policy developments in favour of more sustainable communities or have exposed the ways in which social policies (particularly, in recent years those of austerity) obstruct human flourishing. Furthermore, in different ways they have contributed to the advancement of sustainability literacy (Davies, 2009), both amongst the teams of researchers as they endeavour to understand the obstacles and progress towards sustainable communities, and amongst our community partners as they struggle to find better ways of supporting people to live respectful, co-operative and fulfilling lives.

Figure 2 summarises the complex processes by which these lead to enhancing sustainable development and contribute, ultimately to a sustainable, viable and what Rutherford and Shah (2006) refer to as a 'good society'.

Figure 2: HEI-community engagement supporting the development of sustainable communities

A good society

sustainable

Convivial,resilient, inclusive, flourishing, just,supported communities

Social capital

Human capital

wellbeing

networks, links and alliances

..Collaborative research

knowledge, insight, action, understanding

..collaborative research

empowerment and control

Cultural capital

HEI

Community

partnership

Capacity building

When we have thought about the ways in which university-community partnerships contribute to sustainable communities, we have drawn on concepts from ecology and sustainable agriculture: in particular, the ideas of complex systems, fields and edges (Burton and Kagan, 2015; Kagan and Duggan, 2009). As a field we are considering a terrain that has a boundary and within which interactions happen. Interactions within any field of activity have a structure and complexity that cannot simply be reduced to the sum of those interactions. Furthermore, fields do not have fixed boundaries, they interact with and influence adjacent fields or ecosystems. The area where two ecosystems meet is called the 'ecotone' or ecological 'edge', and contains elements of both contributing fields. The edge can be applied to social systems to maximise resources.

As the 'edge' has characteristics of both ecosystems, it results in a richness of natural resources – both species and energy transactions. We have found it useful to use the concept of 'edge' to think about how to maximise available resources for sustainable development.

All of the projects worked across boundaries, and pooled the resources of different disciplines and professions as well as those of both the universities and community partners. They could be said to have created an ecological 'edge'. Working to create an ecological edge in research is an efficient way to generate and use resources and is a more sustainable way of working than within boundaries.

6 Conclusion

The concept of *sustainable communities* is a useful imaginary and organizing framework for university research into the understanding and enhancement of social aspects of sustainability.

It is possible to articulate the different dimensions of sustainable communities, but research which is capable of addressing complexity can usefully highlight their intersections.

Action research, with high degrees of participation, is an approach that is able to handle complexity, and enables meaningful community based research needs to be met. This requires an explicit value position, time, commitment and an interdisciplinary stance from researchers. One limitation of this approach is that it is time consuming for all concerned and because research questions evolve and cannot always be identified at the outset, funding can be difficult to attract. This makes it even more important that resources of the university and community are combined and maximized.

There is huge potential for university work to inform and contribute to the development of sustainable communities. To do this in a meaningful way they must commit to community engagement as an important subset of public engagement and work to sustain what is good and change what is not at a community level (Benneworth et al, 2010; 2013). We have been able to show how engaged action research can contribute to sustainable development. However, we are aware that this is only touching on the possibilities for university research contributing to sustainable communities and that there are many different kinds of research approach which can be valuable.

Sustainability will only be achieved through the actions of people in families, communities and workplaces and university research at the community level can help the transformation journey to more sustainable futures.

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Biographical Notes

Dr Ornette D. Clennon is a Visiting Enterprise Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Ornette writes for Media Diversified and Open Democracy and is a Public Engagement Ambassador for the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE). He is also a community activist at local and national levels. Ornette's enterprise and activism work has been recognised with the 2011 NCCPE Beacons New Partnerships Award. Ornette is widely published and his previous books include *Alternative Education and Community Engagement: Making Education a Priority* (2014) and *Urban Dialectics, The Market and Youth Engagement: The Black Face of Eurocentrism?* (2015).

Professor John Diamond is the Director of the *Institute for Public Policy and ProfessionalPractice* at Edge Hill University (UK).In 2015 he was invited to give the Annual Keib Thomas Memorial Lecture in London. He is currently the national chair of the not for profit *Association for Research with Voluntary and CommunityOrganisations* (ARVAC) . He has over 25 years experience of working as an external evaluator for a range of funded agencies and charitable organisations. He acts as a critical friend to CEOs working in the not for profit sector. In 2014 he was a co-researcher on a national study funded by the Webb Memorial Trust which examined the role of Fairness Commissions and is working on a follow up study. He is, also co-editor of the journal *Teaching Public Administration* and co-editor of an annual series – *Critical Perspectives on International Public Sector Management* (published by Emerald and launched in 2012). He is responsible for the *Collaborations Across Boundaries* module on the MSc Leadership and Management Development programme at the University.

Dr Jenny Fisher is a Senior Lecturer in Health and Social Care at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). Prior to working at MMU, she gained a wealth of experience in community development and area regeneration. Her PhD was concerned with place based sense of belonging, and she has expertise in community capacity building and community engagement. Jenny led a pioneering Community Organisers' project which tested different ways of engaging people from deprived areas in sustainable community practices. Other recent projects include personalisation and social care reform for older people, evaluation of a community based dementia programme and explorations of social eating with older people.

Ms Katy Goldstraw is a Research Assistant on a project funded by the Webb Memorial Trust, researching concepts of a Good Society for the Institute for Public Policy and Professional practice at Edge Hill University. She holds a Masters Degree in Poverty Reduction and Development Management and is currently undertaking a PhD, studying the effects of austerity policies on the Voluntary Sector in Manchester, UK. Katy is also the director of a small social enterprise, The *Volunteer Training Company*, which is a voluntary sector research and training provider. Katy's primary research interests are in participatory research, feminist research and Livelihoods Analysis.

Professor Carolyn Kagan holds an Emerita Chair in Community Social Psychology at Manchester Metropolitan University where she was the Director of the Research Institute for Health and Social change. Throughout her career she has worked on action research projects in community settings, in pursuit of greater social justice with those marginalised by the social system. Much of Carolyn's work is action oriented, with projects extending over several years, addressing sustainable communities, and complexity in community and human service systems. Her work is collaborative and interdisciplinary and she has worked with colleagues in a number of different countries. She is founding editor of the journal *Community, Work and Family* and a co-author of the groundbreaking text, *Critical Community Psychology*

Professor Rebecca Lawthom is a Professor in Community Psychology at Manchester Metropolitan University where she leads the Social Change and Community Wellbeing Research Group. Rebecca uses feminist, qualitative, creative and community participatory methods in her research which is focused on areas such as migration, disability and community engagement, all of which contribute to the sustainable communities agenda. She has a range of international collaborations for research. She is the Editor of the journal *Community Work and Family* and co-author of the acclaimed texts: *Critical Community Psychology; Qualitative Methods in Psychology;* and *Researching Life Stories.* She teaches on a number of undergraduate and postgraduate courses using dialogic methods.