To our children: Flóra, Teresa and Niko

University and Society

Interdependencies and Exchange

Edited by

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Contents

List of contributors vii

Introductory thoughts 1
Ágnes Kövér and Gaby Franger

PART I CHALLENGING ACADEMIA

1 Universities 'inside' the world: multiscale engagement levels 25
Maria José Casa-Nova

2 Leaving the ivory tower: universities' third mission and the quest for legitimacy 39
Michael Meyer and Barbara Sporn

3 University student volunteering for development: towards a critical approach 58
Nichole Georgeou and Benjamin Haas

4 Sentipensante: feeling–thinking pedagogy: community-based research and teaching 76
Gaby Franger

PART II THE UNIVERSITY AS AN AGENT OF DIALOGUE

5 Dialogue and deliberation in a quiet place 93
Roger A. Lohmann

6 Acting together – means of creative transformation of social conflict 110
György Csepeli

7 University–NGO interaction in Romania: a bridge too far? 127
Nicolae Bibu and Mihai Lisetchi

8 'Are we welcome here?' Building trust through community based research 140
Margot Rawsthorne and Alison de Pree

PART III SERVICE LEARNING AND SERVICE PROVISION

9 Clinical legal education: from loyalty to power to loyalty to society 159
Ágnes Kövér

10 Volunteering@WU: implementing community service learning in Austria 180
Renate Buber, Ekaterina Ivanova, Stefanie Mackerle-Bixa, Michael Meyer and Paul Rameder

11 The Community Semester: enhancing town and gown relations in a medium-size city 199
John Murray

12 University of the Third Age 212
Gábor Hegyesi and Katalin Talyigás

PART IV WORKING WITHIN AND FOR THE COMMUNITY

13 Shifting roles for campus-building in university–community relationships 226
Curt Winkle and David Perry

14 University Residence Flora Tristán: a social project of experiences that breaks down walls 246
Juan Blanco López, M. Ana Almirón, Alfonso Blázquez, Angela Fernández, Maria del Carmen Maguilla and Silvia de la Herrán

15 The university as community developer 261
David Campbell and Dennis Pendleton

16 University and community, Jewish tradition, and social justice 276
Zoltán Háberman

17 Crossroads Repertory Theatre: a model of a university-based theater 292
Arthur Feinsod

Index 307

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8. 'Are we welcome here?' Building trust through community based research

Margot Rawsthorne and Alison de Pree

Internationally, particularly in the United States and Europe, the role of higher education is undergoing change, with universities becoming more actively engaged with community life and community change. In Australia, higher education has been slower in embracing this trend, and not surprisingly the uptake of community engagement in universities has been somewhat uneven. This chapter describes one such Australian example, which statisticians might view as an outlier owing to its longevity, co-production of knowledge and transformative learning. It argues that the building of trust – through consistency, transparency, accountability and action – is vital to any successful university–community engagement or partnership. Our experience suggests that universities wishing to be more active in community change and facilitate authentic learning for their students need to ask themselves: 'Are we welcome here?'

This chapter draws on the experience of building a relationship of trust between the Glebe Community Development Project (Glebe CDP), an initiative of the Social Work and Policy Studies (SW+PS) program at the University of Sydney, and residents in the neighboring suburb of Glebe. It explores the role of community based research in the co-production of knowledge and transformative learning for residents, community groups, community agencies, students and academics.

The University of Sydney is Australia's oldest university, with classes commencing in 1852. Its founding principle was that it would be a modern and progressive institution, a desire that continues to shape it today. When William Charles Wentworth proposed the idea of Australia's first university in 1850, he imagined 'the opportunity for the child of every class to become great and useful in the destinies of this country' (University of Sydney 2016a). Reflecting this inclusive principle, the University of Sydney was the first in the world to enroll women and was the first to graduate an Aboriginal Australian student (University of Sydney 2016a). The

University prides itself on the status and influence of its graduates and has well-established networks of power in professions such as law, medicine and increasingly business (see University of Sydney 2015b for examples of this). In somewhat a departure from these traditional networks of power and privilege (Moxley 2004), the University's *2016–20 Strategic Plan* (University of Sydney 2016b) seeks to lay a path that will ensure the University has more diverse community engagement and becomes more actively engaged with social issues. It includes a vision of teaching and learning engaged with authentic, real life problems (University of Sydney 2016b).

Historically the University of Sydney has played a central role in the development of social work, offering Australia's first social work courses in 1940. Today the SW+PS program distinguishes itself as a critical school of social work, continually engaging with key community issues, social policies and social justice. However, the potential for community practice in higher education 'as a force for institutional change and development' (Moxley 2003: 106) has been poorly developed in Australia. Despite community engagement being identified as a key strategy in the University of Sydney's *2010–15 Strategic Plan*, progress has been less than hoped for (University of Sydney 2016b). It has been slow to adapt to community demand for greater engagement, academic duty and relevance to social problems (Moxley 2003: 105). Robinson (2014) suggests this lack of practical implementation of the rhetorical commitment is common across Australian universities. In a paper analyzing the extent to which research for community benefit is supported in policy, Carman (2013) reviewed the strategic plans of 38 Australian universities. The majority of strategic plans expressed a commitment to research that focuses on community and social benefit (Carman 2013: 7). However, Carman highlights that there is often a lack of recognition for academics who work in partnerships with communities and that this kind of work is not counted as academic performance in most university metrics (Carman 2013: 3). Robinson's own search of the peer reviewed literature in 2014 did not generate a large number of articles, 'indicating that university community engagement research is a relatively new field of enquiry in Australia' (Robinson 2014: 2).

This context provides the backdrop for the story of the Glebe Community Development Project and its engagement with social change detailed in this chapter. The Glebe CDP is an example of the possibilities created for students, staff and the broader community when institutions of higher education actively engage in collaborative social change through education and knowledge building.

GLEBE AS A COMMUNITY

The suburb of Glebe lies on the northern border of the University of Sydney's main campus, across a footbridge. It is home to an enormous diversity by wealth, housing status, occupation, age and cultural background. The Glebe postcode area covers just over two square kilometers (Solling 2007) and sits about three kilometers west of Sydney Central Business District. The population has been stable over the past decade, with around 11,000 people living in Glebe. Of these, a little over 2 per cent are Indigenous. The majority of the population was born in Australia and only speak English (Clancey and Russell 2016). There is evidence of socially polarized populations, with the two most common personal incomes being greater than $2000 per week and between $200 and $299 per week. This income disparity reflects the history of settlement in Glebe. The land surrounding Blackwattle Bay was granted to an Anglican priest in 1790 and subsequently the Church of England (Glebe Society 2016). The Church developed 'the Glebe Estate' from the 1890s to provide homes for Sydney's poorest residents (Barani 2016). The Estate comprised some 700 dwellings, approximately 20 percent of the total suburb, which the Church struggled to maintain. In 1974 the Estate was purchased by the Commonwealth Government from the Church of England to provide affordable public housing to working class people in the inner city (Glebe Society 2016). In 1985 the entire Estate was transferred to the State Government of New South Wales. The Estate comprises a mix of heritage worker cottages, large terraces and more recently constructed units. The existence of large terraces, with four or more bedrooms, is unusual within public housing stock. It is these terraces that have made Glebe attractive to Aboriginal families, with about a third of Aboriginal households having more than four residents. Currently approximately 300 Aboriginal residents live in Glebe.

A significant proportion of the Glebe population (19 percent in the 2011 Census) resides in public or social housing, which equates to approximately 2000 residents residing in properties managed by state, social or Aboriginal housing providers (ABS 2011). This is well above the State average of 4 percent and places Glebe in the highest 20 locations for public housing provision. More broadly it is estimated that 214,000 people live in some 150,000 public housing dwellings across the State. A further 120,000 people are eligible for public housing and are on the waiting list (NSW Auditor-General 2013). As the waiting list grows, priority housing applicants (those with the highest needs) are increasingly making up the majority of new residents. This is particularly reflected in larger public housing estates, where there is a large concentration of disadvantaged

households with compounding social, mental and physical health problems (NSW Auditor-General 2013). The residents of social housing in Glebe experience greater levels of social exclusion, mental distress, addiction and violence, reflecting structural inequalities and power.

GLEBE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Glebe Community Development Project was established in 2004 as a joint initiative of the then Department of Housing and the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney. Interestingly, this coincided with Moxley's suggestion in the US context that, 'over the next ten years, higher education may be one of the most important venues for community practice and for social workers who are interested in building learning communities, creating partnerships between colleges and their communities, and in creating and testing new community interventions' (2003: 106).

The broad aim of the Glebe CDP was to improve the life opportunities of disadvantaged residents within Glebe and Camperdown, particularly those living in public housing. Key to the Glebe CDP's work was:

- to *work in partnership* with local residents and organizations to build community capacity and increase social cohesion in the Glebe and Camperdown communities;
- to *identify, develop and evaluate* strategies to enhance community development initiatives within the public housing communities of Glebe and Camperdown; and
- to *generate knowledge* about the opportunities, constraints and effective strategies to build strong communities in rapidly changing urban contexts, including the roles of government, business, non-government sector organizations and the University of Sydney. (de Pree 2016)

The project is involved in a wide range of community development activities, including: supporting the formation of social action groups; facilitating community participation in decision making processes; resourcing community celebrations; undertaking research projects; and providing individual support and advocacy as required. These activities have been undertaken collaboratively with individual residents, community groups and funded agencies. Independent evaluations and ongoing reflection indicate that this approach has been effective in breaking down isolation, avoiding stigma and building social cohesion (Frazer Howard & Partners

2009). It is estimated that over 5000 residents have participated in community events such as fetes, arts projects and pop-up park family days.

A key aspect of this community development was the development and testing of new community interventions. Interventions developed by the project were framed within a community based research approach, enabling lessons to be identified and disseminated. Approximately 20 formal research reports have been written and disseminated to local residents and groups since 2004. One project explored the use of exercise and sport based community development initiatives to support people living with mental illness and their carers in the community (Ellis and Howald 2016). This project employed a photo-voice methodology, shifting power to define experiences to those living with mental illness.

The Glebe CDP provides learning opportunities to social work students, hosting four to eight student placements each year. In its ten-year history it has provided nearly 700 weeks of student learning to 50 social work students on placement. The Glebe CDP has also linked students in other disciplines to learning in Glebe, including those studying teaching, oral hygiene, nursing, occupational therapy, speech therapy, media studies, human rights and law. Students from the University are also hosted by other agencies within Glebe. This positioning of Glebe as a site for learning is actively embraced by community members, signifying a challenge to understandings of knowledge and expertise.

Academic staff, primarily from Social Work and Policy Studies, have driven the establishment and ongoing development of the initiative. The Glebe CDP is viewed as an enactment of the SW+PS program's commitment to social justice, providing a key site for community development learning, teaching and knowledge building. Academics within SW+PS reflected international trends of 'reaching across the boundaries of their particular niches in higher education to create partnerships, undertake collaborative projects, and engage in nontraditional forms of pedagogy' (Moxley 2003: 104). Funds are attracted to support the work of the Glebe CDP from a wide range of sources including internal Faculty resources, competitive University grants, community grants and research grants. The University has invested over $1.5 million in the Glebe CDP, although staffing remains small (two or three part-time staff). This is a very modest investment over more than a decade given the University's reported operating surplus of some $158 million in 2015 alone (University of Sydney 2015a). Alison (a co-author of this chapter) has been employed for the entire duration of the project, providing a rare longitudinal insight into university–community engagement.

Despite our desire to engage with our northern neighbors the initiative was initially meet with skepticism and suspicion by local residents. For

many people universities have typically engaged with 'disadvantaged' communities as subjects of deficit based research, what might be called 'the fish bowl' approach. Our partner in the initiative at that stage, NSW Housing, was the provider of housing for the most 'disadvantaged'. It was the landlord of social housing residents, holding the power to make decisions that affected the daily lives of residents with complex needs. Tenants' trust in NSW Housing to make the right decisions was very low. Many residents in Glebe had no reason to trust either of the partners, nor could they see how they might benefit from the initiative. Some residents feared the two powerful institutions 'coming to help' and how this might impact on their lives. Would Glebe be seen merely as an extension of the classroom? Would residents be treated as 'subjects' or 'guinea-pigs' for research and student learning? The evolution of what we now call a 'community based research' approach was central to building trust.

COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH

In the development of the SW+PS engagement in Glebe it was clear that traditional research power relationships would be an impediment to building trust and the co-production of new knowledge. Like Pigza (2016) we see community based research as 'human work that requires time, transparency, authenticity, trust, accountability, and clear communication' (Pigza 2016: 96). The research approach needs to 'fit' with the principles of community development informing the actions of the Glebe CDP (Rawsthorne and Howard 2011). Research questions needed to emerge from dialogue and listening, rather than being imposed from outside the community. The community and research participants had to be able to influence decisions and exercise agency. Research needed to capture the diversity of experiences and provide ways in which people's voices were central. Importantly, research activities needed to build the capacities of community members and leave something with the community of value. It was through all of these processes that the research activities of the University would be held accountable to the community of Glebe, rather than Glebe simply providing a convenient site for academic research.

Knowledge building has traditionally sat within university walls. A common understanding of universities sees them as 'repositories of sacred knowledge', 'transmitters' of knowledge and 'devoted to discovery' (Moxley 2003: 104). The culture of academia is often elitist, embedding 'expertise' within institutions of higher education (Pigza 2016). This impacts not only on how individual academics undertake their research but also how the broader community views knowledge building (Powell 2014).

For many, particularly those with fewer resources and opportunities, this can result in an affirmation of academia's claim of ownership of knowledge building. Community based research is a marked departure from university initiated research endeavors. The University of Sydney's strategic vision included 'a mission to pursue the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge and understanding, attuned to the aspirations of society' (University of Sydney 2016b: 19). This conceptualization of knowledge building is university-centric, failing to acknowledge or capitalize on the co-production of knowledge. The University hopes to achieve this through investing in research strengths, attracting the best students and, somewhat as an aside, 'expand[ing] and develop[ing] new partnerships, both locally and globally, that enable our research to make a difference' (University of Sydney 2016b: 19). As has been argued previously, this sense in which working beyond the university is not central to knowledge building is not unique to the University of Sydney but common across the academic sector (Moxley 2003; Carman 2013; Robinson 2014).

The adoption of a community based research framework (Frankel Merenstein 2015; Caine and Mill 2016) to build knowledge *with* residents, students, community development workers and academics in Glebe has evolved over time. It was not a linear process, with a range of other methodologies influencing our work, particularly action research. Like other participatory forms of research (see Stoecker 2003 for example), community based research seeks to 'develop practical knowledge that is relevant to the community' (Caine and Mill 2016: 19). Unlike action research, however, most of the research tasks (applying for ethical approval, designing instruments, collecting data and analysis) have been undertaken by students, under the direction of paid staff and/or residents. The Glebe CDP's research activities are grounded in the day-to-day experiences of residents and engaged with issues of personal, communal and structural power (Caine and Mill 2016: 14). The questions explored arose from the community and reflect issues of importance to the community (Frankel Merenstein 2015). These have included projects on food security, community perceptions of drug and alcohol use, out-of-school activities for 8- to 12-year-olds, the support needs of men, and social cohesion. Through these research projects knowledge is built about the impact of social policies and programs within a social justice framework that emphasizes resident participation in decision making, community capacity, social inclusion and collaborative action (Gilchrist and Taylor 2011; Vinson and Rawsthorne 2013). Accordingly, there is a continual loop of planning–action–evaluation–planning between the residents and the Glebe CDP.

Data collection in Glebe has primarily focused on specific cases or projects drawing on participant observation, project reports, semi-structured

interviews, focus group discussions, surveys and document analysis but has also included video-making, photography and other visual representations. The scope of the data collected supports research rigor though triangulation and extended reflection (Stake 2003: 150). A key focus of this data collection was to 'seek out emic meanings held by the people within the case' (Stake 2003: 144), that is, to explore how individuals interpreted and made sense of their experiences.

IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH IN GLEBE – FLAG

In Glebe the process that underpins the community based research facilitated through the Glebe CDP is the Forest Lodge and Glebe Co-ordination Group (FLAG). FLAG is not an interagency but a forum to facilitate local conversations and planning. Meetings, which are held monthly, are open to residents and those working in Glebe/Forest Lodge. The group aims to foster links across the community more generally, rather than within narrow silos (such as a children's services network). The terms of reference for FLAG include:

- to assist and aid co-ordination of community initiatives;
- to facilitate co-operation between the sectors;
- to support and promote the work of stakeholders;
- to maximize opportunities to attract funds and resources to strengthen the community;
- to act as a consultative forum for plans and matters relating to Forest Lodge and Glebe;
- to increase local knowledge of community initiatives in Forest Lodge and Glebe; and
- to support community action on major issues of concern for Forest Lodge and Glebe.

FLAG has met in Glebe for over ten years, with various agencies hosting and/or chairing the meetings. The Glebe CDP has acted as a secretariat for FLAG, distributing agenda and taking minutes. The monthly meetings have a regular attendance of about 20 people, with at least six local residents participating. Each year however FLAG hosts a networking and planning event which attracts 40–50 people from agencies including local schools, the police, local government, state government, universities, community agencies and community groups. These forums respond to and identify issues of concern to the community. Priorities have included

food security, neighborhood conflict, educational opportunities for young people, social isolation particularly among older people, the lack of communal facilities, and supporting people living with mental illness in the community (Glebe Community Development Project 2016).

EXEMPLARS OF COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH

In this section two in-depth exemplars are provided of how community based research principles have informed the activities of the Glebe CDP. These are people based, firstly, with older women and, secondly, with Aboriginal people. Each exemplar is framed by the principles of community based research: that research questions emerge through dialogue and listening; that the community and participants can influence decisions and exercise agency; that research needs to capture the diversity of experiences and provide ways in which people's voices are central; and that research builds capacities and leaves something of value with the community. These exemplars illustrate the importance of relationships over time to the success of community based research. Writing about process inherently flattens and simplifies. Working with both older women and the Aboriginal community has been fluid and complex, befitting any valuable relationship.

Working with Older Women

Listening to older women commenced through a formal consultation process at the very beginning of the CDP's work in Glebe. We knew from the demographic data that a significant proportion of Glebe residents (38.2 percent) lived alone. Of the total population 15.6 percent is aged over 60 years, with nearly 1200 of these being older women (ABS 2011). This research project sought to gain insight into the perception of the strength and issues facing older people in the community (Glebe Community Development Project 2004: 5). At this early stage of our engagement in Glebe this research approach was closer to a more traditional deficit research approach, notwithstanding its aim of providing a voice for older people. The first step was to conduct a literature review to inform the research questions, followed by one-on-one semi-structured interviews with local older people and service providers. The interview questions related to health, safety, social participation, service use, and general perceptions about the neighborhood. This consultation resulted in a report entitled 'Glebe: An Older Perspective', which aimed to ensure the issues affecting older people were integrated into broader community planning

(Vinson and Rawsthorne 2013). It is at this point that most research projects conclude. For older women and the Glebe CDP, however, this rather traditional research process proved to be the springboard for exploring new relationships, ideas and action.

Following the launch of the report staff and students from the Glebe CDP met fortnightly with a group of older women. These conversations identified a wide range of issues that hindered older women's participation in the broader community, including physical infrastructure (seating, lighting and footpaths), services (public transport, health and housing) and ageist assumptions. These meetings became a catalyst for the formation of the Concerned Older Women's Group (COW) in 2005. This name reflected the women's wit (in Australia the term 'old cow' can be used derogatorily towards older women), and by reclaiming this name the women signaled their desire to challenge ageist stereotypes. Through the formation of COW, supported by the activities of the Glebe CDP, the group aimed to ensure that the diverse voices of older women were included in community conversations. COW formed as an action group to identify issues affecting the community, develop strategies and take action.

> We were all sitting down the old fire station whinging. Whinging, we need more street lighting, we're not safe at night, bits of us don't work properly anymore, we can't run if we're going to be attacked and blah, blah, blah. The seats are falling apart, you get splinters, they are not maintaining them. We need more seating . . . that's how the Cow Group started. Because as a group we are able to get things done whereas people alone don't seem to get anywhere with authorities. The group is recognized in the Sydney LGA [local government area] because of its proactive approach to being heard around their demographic needs and gaining visibility and consideration by local organizations. (Concerned Older Women's Group 2014)

The Glebe CDP worked alongside the COW group between 2005 and 2015. Over this time a great deal was achieved, underpinned by a commitment to mutual learning and the co-production of knowledge. Drawing on a community based research approach COW members were holders of valuable knowledge that could be harnessed for positive social change. A specific example is the identification of pedestrian safety for people with lower mobility. This issue arose from COW members' experiences as well as their observations and conversations with others in the community. The Glebe CDP supported COW in documenting the problem of crossing busy city roads, raising awareness of this issue and advocating for changes to traffic lights. This very small piece of community based research led to changes that increased the safety and participation of people with lower mobility, not only older people. In this way, the research activity left something

behind that was of value to the community in terms of specific changes but also enhanced capacities to self-organize and advocate.

Older women were actively engaged as educators through this relationship, including providing campus based guest lectures to students on ageing. Each semester a social work student was allocated to supporting the COW group on a weekly basis, learning about the experiences of older women as well as group processes, collaborative research and advocacy. The quote below highlights the relational basis of this work, which provides a deep, contextual understanding of older women and the possibilities of social work:

> We usually get a couple of social work students who come to the Glebe Development Project and they usually help with the COW Group, that's one of the things that they learn to do and it's really good for them because like you they get a different idea of older people. They get a different idea of poorer communities and what we can do and most of them have been pretty honest and said that they didn't expect to really relate to us and we've ended up being grandmother and mother figures to lots of them. (Concerned Older Women's Group 2014)

Trust between older women in Glebe and the Glebe CDP was built over time, through working together on issues of importance to older women, and knowledge was co-produced between students, residents and academics. This worked at a number of levels: locally in terms of changes that supported greater participation among older women; at a communal level in terms of the valuing of older women; and through more traditional forums with the production of research reports and engaging in policy debates.

Working with Aboriginal Residents

The University of Sydney's connection to Aboriginal[1] peoples of what is now known as Glebe pre-dates White settlement. The University of Sydney main campus is located on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Within its grounds are remnants of Blackwattle Creek, the original tidal watercourse that flowed through a valley of thick wattle and into Blackwattle Bay, Glebe. The Gadigal and Wanngal clans have an unbroken connection to the lands and waters of Blackwattle Bay (University of Sydney 2016a). Prior to European settlement, the creek was a source of fresh water, a place for fishing and other communal activities. During the early decades of European settlement the creek was located at the edge of town, but by the middle of the nineteenth century the course of the creek was highly modified and densely inhabited (Barani 2016).

As mentioned previously, today Glebe is home to some 300 Aboriginal people, the third largest population in the Greater Sydney region. Reflecting the impact of colonization and dispossession, these people are from lands throughout Australia. The traditional homelands of residents include those of the Bidjira Nation in southwestern Queensland, those of the Wilyakali tribe in Broken Hill and the Gamileroi homelands in northwest New South Wales. Some people have links going as far as Arnhem Land, and of course a number of Gadigal people, the traditional custodians of Sydney, reside in Glebe. Many prominent writers, artists, activists and leaders have lived in Glebe, the result being a strong sense of cultural, political and creative identity (Glebe Community Development Project 2015).

Unlike the case in the neighboring suburb of Redfern, few services are available for local people, although a number of significant state and national agencies originate from or are based in Glebe. Aboriginal residents of Glebe share many of the challenges of Aboriginal people throughout Australia: poor experiences of formal education; higher levels of unemployment; greater physical and mental health issues; and loss of connection to land, language and culture. They also share many of the strengths of Aboriginal people: resilience in the face of alienation and racism; strong family and communal bonds; a rich tradition of art, dance and cultural expression; and a willingness to work for better life opportunities for their community. It is this willingness and the goodwill many Aboriginal people show towards non-Indigenous people that formed the basis of a conversation between the Glebe CDP and a number of local Aboriginal people. This conversation was shaped by the question 'What can we do together that might be useful for Aboriginal people living in Glebe?'

The conversation, which continues today, commenced in 2008. Unsurprisingly, it has not been an easy conversation, with misunderstandings, mistrust and frustrations. As a starting point, Aboriginal people were very clear they would not be 'subjects' of the University research activities. This is increasingly a common position of Aboriginal people, who have participated in research over decades to find little or no value from the research flowing to their communities and in some cases the research causing harm. Community based research and other participatory approaches were well placed to respond to and respect this skepticism of research through the co-production of knowledge.

In 2008 a group of leaders in the local Aboriginal community agreed to meet with the Glebe CDP. These meetings developed into a 'steering committee' identifying issues, providing advice and working on specific projects. The first, and most pressing, was the employment of Aboriginal staff within the Glebe CDP and other agencies. Almost immediately the relationship was confronted with dominant understandings of 'evidence'

and how that evidence is used to establish 'need'. The steering committee guarded against a deficit portrayal of the community, adopting a rights based framework to shape the research. Data was carefully collected, both quantitative and qualitative, to form the basis of a submission to various funders and philanthropists. Working collaboratively the steering committee and the Glebe CDP were able to craft a submission that reflected the community's understandings. This process was an important step in building trust within the relationship and demonstrated how the Glebe CDP (and by default the University) was intending to work. This steering committee disbanded, but the process provided a blueprint for future projects, embedded within a community based research model.

Each year across Australia Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people celebrate NAIDOC. NAIDOC originally stood for 'National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee'. This committee was once responsible for organizing national activities during NAIDOC Week, and its acronym has since become the name of the week itself (NAIDOC 2016). NAIDOC Week celebrates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In Glebe it has become an annual highpoint of cultural activities, reconciliation and education. Regular events include a corroboree (for young people), an elders' lunch, a family day, a history tour, film nights and political debates. The activities draw 600–1000 people over the week. The Glebe CDP has sponsored grant funds, and resourced and actively participated in NAIDOC activities for the past decade. This has included the employment of a part-time Aboriginal staff person to co-ordinate and drive the activities. Framed within a community based research approach, the acquittal of grant funds becomes an opportunity to communicate differently with funding bodies about the value of events such as NAIDOC. Videos, photos and quotes are used to capture what NAIDOC means to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents. These are complemented with more traditional acquittal data (such as numbers).

In 2012 with the renovation of a major public building within Glebe an opportunity arose to address another concern expressed by local residents – the lack of a 'place' run by and for the Aboriginal community. Working with a number of local Aboriginal people the Glebe CDP put in an expression of interest to the local council for space in the renovated building for the establishment of an Aboriginal cultural space (ACS). For many years there has been a gap not only in service delivery but of a general autonomous meeting space for Indigenous residents to gather in and call their own. The ACS has intended, in some small part, to be a response to this gap.

> I believe the time is long overdue for our community to have access to resources to enable our Indigenous community members to feel that Glebe is where their roots are. At present many of our peoples have to travel to other areas such as Redfern to have any form of cultural contact. (Uncle Ken Canning, Bidura elder, Men's Group) (Glebe Community Development Project 2015)

The ACS reference group envisaged the Aboriginal cultural space would be somewhere to:

- run programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, men, youth and elders;
- organize events, forums, campaigns and workshops;
- collaborate with each other on issues relevant to the Indigenous community;
- hold art workshops, exhibitions and other creative events;
- provide education for community members through empowerment and training;
- develop a social space for people from Glebe to relax, meet and have a yarn;
- promote health, wellbeing and healing for Indigenous peoples;
- meet to organize and hold events, exhibitions, celebrations, forums, campaigns, workshops and any other activities the Aboriginal community instigates or approves. (Glebe Community Development Project 2015)

The development, activities and ongoing evaluation of the ACS are all shaped by community based research principles. A 'yarning' methodology was adopted, with Glebe CDP staff visiting elders and other leaders in their homes, discussing options and listening. These conversations revealed ongoing challenges about 'ownership' of the ACS by Aboriginal people, resources (particularly in terms of staff or volunteers) and the relationship with the Glebe CDP and the University (Glebe Community Development Project 2015). This work is clearly 'slow' work, based on complex, multi-layered relationships. One resident commented in the evaluation: 'It takes time to get to know workers and to feel comfortable with them. Also, workers need time to get to know different community members and find out who can be called on to help.'

A significant positive shift in the relationship between the Glebe CDP and the local Aboriginal community was the staging of a constitutional recognition debate. This debate responded directly to issues raised by local elders and was political in nature. It provided an opportunity for Aboriginal leaders on opposite sides of the recognition debate to mount their argument and facilitated dialogue for future strategies. In

was attended by well over 100 people, and all speeches were uploaded to YouTube unedited. This demonstrated the Glebe CDP's capacity to assist in the creation of space for debate about issues of importance to the community without needing to take ownership.

For social work students, working with and supporting the development of the ACS has been transformative. Historically Australian social work has been 'White', with little consideration of its racial privileges (Walter et al. 2011). Student reflections on the experience highlight the rare opportunity provided to them through the Glebe CDP's work with the Aboriginal community, with one commenting: 'learning cultural competence through engaged learning provides a space to "learn and practice" reconciliation – how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people might live together in this place, how we might learn from each other, how we forge new identities through this process' (Ben, fourth year BSW student) (Rawsthorne et al. 2015).

DISCUSSION

For over a decade the SW+PS program has been embedded in our local neighborhood through the Glebe CDP. Although this chapter may suggest otherwise, we have probably had as many 'failures' as 'successes'. We've put these concepts in inverted commas for a reason. These concepts may in fact be unhelpful for universities seeking to engage with communities and social change. They suggest a capacity to objectively measure outcomes. Our experience over time is that relationships are fluid, contextual and hard work! Unlike a traditional research relationship which ends with a report or journal article, community based research is to some extent open ended. One thing leads to another and rarely in a linear manner. The lack of a linear path is also clear in concepts such as engagement, trust and relationships. In reflecting on our experiences in Glebe we see all these concepts as doing words – it is through our actions that we build engagement, trust and relationships. And this work is ongoing, not static.

It is likely no coincidence that the Glebe CDP arose within a Social Work and Policy Studies program located within a Faculty of Education and Social Work. This context ensured work beyond the University's walls was understood as valuable and supported, despite some moments of confusion about community development principles. It is important to note that whilst this chapter has focused on how we tried to build trust outside the University a similar parallel process was occurring within the University. The approach taken in Glebe, and the adoption of non-traditional research strategies, was foreign to many within the conservative

institution of the University of Sydney. Academic involvement, whilst tolerated, did not receive recognition within the broader institution through normal systems (such as promotions or workload calculations). Working inside communities also involves working inside our institutions of higher education to build trust.

Moxley's (2003) observations appear very poignant in the Australian context – higher education has become one of the most important venues for emerging community practice. The shift towards pre-determined outcome funding has been very detrimental to organic, bottom-up community development (Rawsthorne and Howard 2011). The commitment of specific staff, students and residents to building trust needs also to be acknowledged. As mentioned previously, Alison has been employed continuously within the Glebe CDP over the past 12 years. This level of stability is likely to be a key element in building and maintaining trust. In this way she has become the 'face' of the University in Glebe, and her commitment to transparency and accountability has allowed the relationship to manage both good and difficult times. The willingness of residents and other workers to hold the Glebe CDP and the University to account is a testament to the strength of the relationship and trust.

Our experience also highlights that universities wishing to work 'inside' communities need to be flexible and agile. Communities are not homogeneous, and building trust in diverse communities is complex. This means being happy to cook the barbecue and serve coffees to residents living in social housing, being academic in our approach to more formal groups, being supportive and a resource to community organizations, and being expected to take minutes and write grants for community groups. Doing this work well means adopting multi-pronged strategies for different parts of the community.

Community based research creates great opportunities for universities seeking to work with or 'inside' communities. Our experience suggests that to realize the potential of community engaged universities for students, academics and the broader community a number of factors are important. The engagement needs to be 'real' or authentic – students and staff simply ticking off boxes will find their experiences diminished. Community members will not engage in any meaningful way if they feel you are not genuine in your desire to know them and be useful. Research needs to be responsive to local issues, not an external agenda. Collaboration in identifying research questions, designing methodology and interpreting findings is vital. An element of this must be a focus on building capacities within the community, including project management and research skills. Ownership of the knowledge generated must be shared with the local community, including how that knowledge is communicated. This reflects a

commitment to respect the local political and ethical processes. One of the most important (and possibly challenging) aspects of effective community engagement is flexibility (Moxley 2004). Community life has its own rhythm or cycle.

Adopting a community based research approach has enabled us to bridge the seeming gulf between the University and our local neighbors. It has answered the question 'Are we welcome here?' with a 'Yes, but only if we can do this together'.

NOTE

1. Many Indigenous people of New South Wales prefer the term 'Aboriginal', and this chapter respects this by adopting this usage. It is inclusive of Aboriginal people from other states and territories and the Torres Strait Islands.

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