

## Things to think about when working with the creatives alongside communities

Working with underrepresented communities and creatives enhances the relevance of research, makes culture count in society, and initiates a broader dialogue outside the University. A creative element is a great way to start to engage with communities and, when it goes well, it can, in turn, feed into research in rich and unexpected ways. But how can you achieve that cyclical process?

Here are some areas to reflect on from the start of your project to help create the right environment for participatory research with creatives and community groups.

1. Start with the ethics approval process and structures at Warwick as these will affect the research questions and the potential impact (the ethics approval process separates research from impact when in reality they blur)
2. Respect the artists and the community you are working with. Listen before you speak.
3. Explore every possible funding source (including funds outside the university such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund which your partners may already be familiar with) because working on creative projects can be expensive.
4. Creatives and community will have differing needs and priorities and you need to respect these. Set up negotiations right from the start so that everyone can work together and understand what each other is hoping to achieve. Compromises may be needed on all sides.
5. Be ready to relinquish control – all those involved need to be equally involved in shaping the project and it may, therefore, go in a different direction to the one you envisaged.
6. Where is the agency of the artist and/or the community in the research process? How will you navigate the evolution of artist as responder to your pre-formed research to artist as co-director working alongside you and the community? Be alert to ways in which the boundaries can shift.
7. Discuss intellectual property early on – it's important to make clear who retains intellectual property and how the university can have a record or copy for its purposes. Drawing up agreements on who does what, who pays for what and who keeps the rights and for how long can be protracted so start early!
8. Ensure that lines of communication remain open throughout the process and aspire to be transparent. If appropriate, to share your planning, critical reflection and planning processes with your partners and ask for their feedback.
9. What do you want to get out of the process? Outputs for REF for instance don't have to be articles – websites with a reflective narrative or films as co-produced research also count. Rethink your taxonomy of outputs and bear in mind that your work with your partners is likely to change the nature of your academic work and how you write.
10. Working alongside artists and communities can change the role of the researcher – you can gain enormously from the collaboration, but it will require you to think about the process of research differently because you as researcher are decentred if the collaboration is genuinely equal. This can then make it more complicated to write up the project in 'traditional academic article' style. Think instead about how collaborative authorship of outputs might work for all those involved. Remember, you will remain a publishing researcher throughout and beyond your collaboration. Give some critical thought as to how the voice, pitch, and format of your research has changed and how it might, in some cases need to re-emerge. In addition to working on 'new' outputs, consider how you will reconnect with more traditional publishing cultures (journals, monographs, edited volumes) and on whether or how what you write in those contexts might change (or not), as a result of your collaborative work.