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# Politics and Practice of Inclusion: Intersectional Participatory Action Research

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## Abstract

A politics of exclusion is gaining ground in the global North and South, actively excluding and delegitimising certain groups. At the same time, in global policy discourse, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, there is an increasing focus on inclusion of the most marginalised, and a reduction of inequalities. This article explores the politics and practice of inclusion through grounded examples of intersectional participatory action research. It uses examples from South Africa and India to consider the added value of taking an intersectional approach to participatory action research. We trace how intersectionality in practice draws attention to hidden knowledge and experience, challenges discriminatory labels, and requires careful navigation between individual and group processes. We analyse the potential for PAR processes to enable groups to surface and acknowledge inequalities across difference. We propose that, through creative processes and iterative dialogue and reflection, exclusionary attitudes and discourses which undermine people's agency can be challenged, and alternative, inclusive narratives may be constructed. Finally, we argue that this process is relevant to wider political debates.

## Introduction

*'People relocated following slum clearance, in tenements at the city outskirts, gathered to express anger at being picked up like garbage and dumped in the gutter because of their caste. The atmosphere was tense, and I felt conflicted as I had to direct activities assertively to alleviate tensions, whilst trying to support participants' authorship. Yet, key insight came from the comparison between these emotions and those of the street-dwellers energised through collective action that achieved water and electricity provision'*

JS – field diary

A politics of exclusion is gaining ground in the global North and South, actively excluding and delegitimising certain groups. In the US and the UK, refugees and migrants are blamed by leading politicians and media outlets for social problems, and the failures of overburdened public services (Jones et al. 2017); and dominant narratives stigmatise those who are reliant on welfare (Baumberg et al 2012). Right-wing political parties have come to power in countries recently at the forefront of participatory democracy, exemplified by the election of Bolsonaro in Brazil and Modi in India. Sexual minorities face violent government repression in many African countries (Currier, 2018), and in Eastern Europe despite supposed legal protection (Mole, 2016). The consequences of these political shifts are still unfolding, but many historically marginalised groups are now facing rising hostility and active state violence. In parallel, there is an increasing focus on reducing inequalities and including the most marginalised in global policy discourse, as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (Howard and Wheeler, 2016). It is therefore both timely and urgent to consider how research can contribute to understanding and ultimately addressing inequalities.

Community development research and practice with excluded people need to be complexity aware, as the drivers of marginalisation and subjective experiences of marginality are multiple. This requires methodologies to build better understanding of the diversity of lived realities, and how to tackle the issues generated by marginalisation in context. This article focuses specifically on Participatory Action Research (PAR) as an appropriate methodological approach. We are researchers from the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations (CTPSR), Coventry University (Wheeler), and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Sussex University (Shaw and Howard). We have decades of participatory research experience with highly marginalised groups in diverse community, health and development contexts. Central to our approach is the assumption that, through understanding each other's lived experiences - the challenges faced, and future hopes and aspirations, people can find common ground to resource and drive collective action. Yet, in methodological terms, there has been insufficient attention on how this can be achieved across difference.

In this article, we draw on case studies from India and South Africa to consider how using 'intersectionality' and 'intersecting inequalities' as an analytical lens and practical approach to conducting community-based PAR processes can deepen or strengthen inclusion; and also the methodological challenges this raises. We combine the concept of intersectionality, which has a profoundly political commitment to engage with the way race and gender interact variously to substantively shape the life experiences of different individuals (Crenshaw 1989); with the broader framework of intersecting inequalities (Kabeer 2016). We use this framework to focus specifically on identifying the added value of taking an intersectional approach to PAR, both to assist practitioners in navigating power dynamics within and across groups whilst building collective action, and to enable groups to surface and acknowledge differing experiences. We propose that, through iterative dialogue and reflection, exclusionary attitudes and discourses which undermine people's agency can be challenged, and alternative, inclusive narratives may be constructed; and that careful surfacing and working through group-level power imbalances, can build a foundation for a stronger, difference-aware collective action.

We also recognise that intersecting inequalities create blind-spots for all involved, including the facilitators of change processes. It is not enough to claim to be 'inclusive' or to use 'participatory methods' without attempting to interrogate how inequalities arise and interact in project contexts, including our own influence as facilitating researchers or practitioners. Identifying, researching and attempting to transform intersecting inequalities calls for a methodological approach which enables us to reflect on our positionality and relative power within the group as well as in relation to the wider community. We thus consider the theoretical and practical dilemmas in bringing this lens to PAR processes. In particular, we highlight three tensions and practice challenges for researchers/practitioners: i) getting beneath the surface of labels and names while also recognising our own positionality and that of others; ii) navigating a process which enables diverse and invisibilised experiences to emerge through different ways of knowing, while also enabling participants and practitioners control over how and when and what is communicated; and iii) building inclusive collective action, which does not reify experiences or homogenise difference, but provides a firmer foundation for collectivity to be sustained.

## **Bringing Intersecting Inequalities into PAR methodologies**

The concept of intersectionality relates to how people experience and negotiate socially-constructed identities such as race, class and gender, but also sexuality, ethnicity, ability and age, and how these identities function reciprocally to open or constrain opportunities (Collins and Bilge 2016). Intersectionality can enrich analytical and methodological approaches by drawing attention to the power differentials within groups that share some identities, as well as between these and other more powerful groups. Our framework links this concept to intersecting inequalities, which refers to the compounded effect of other layers of disadvantage, operating in addition to these socially constructed identities (Kabeer 2016; see also Shaw et al, this issue). This framework retains its roots in feminist and critical race theory, to critically analyse how identity-based, geographical and economic factors interact in context to drive marginalisation. It can be applied both as an analytical tool to understand the complexity of real-life inequalities, power and privilege (Howard and Vajda 2017), and as a way to direct action for social justice (Burns et al. 2013; Collins and Bilge 2016). In this article, we bring it to consider the practice of PAR in researching and addressing marginalisation.

PAR is well-documented in its uses for surfacing and addressing concerns around social, spatial and economic injustices with marginalised groups (Chambers 1994, Kindon, Pain and Kesby 2007). Incorporating creative and performative methods encourages collective self-reflection and builds awareness of how wider systems are implicated in shared experiences (Park, Brydon-Miller et al. 1993; Reason and Bradbury 2001; Gaventa and Cornwall 2008). Furthermore, by directly involving participants as researchers in exploring their own issues and concerns, PAR challenges the conventional researcher-subject divide: we name this active collaboration role as 'researcher/practitioner'.

Yet there are also critiques that some PAR processes reinforce existing hierarchies and hegemonies: participatory approaches to research and development can give the appearance of opening space to shift power, while actually diverting attention away from neo-colonial agendas (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Feminist PAR practitioners and scholars have called attention to issues

relating to the intersection of race, gender and class in research interpretation, translation and representation (Reid and Frisby 2008, Harding and Norberg 2003). We suggest that an intersecting inequalities framework strengthens the potential for PAR processes to be more aware of how structures of power operate within groups as well as between the group and other more powerful actors. However, practitioners and researchers may feel it necessary to emphasise group formation and consensus-building over recognising differences that could undermine the potential for collective action. This can mean insufficient attention is paid to the methodological challenges of how to research and address intersecting inequalities. For example, in the case explored below, the PAR process was with pavement dwellers or 'citymakers' in Chennai, which seemed a relevant group to mobilise to influence urban governance policy. But as the PAR unfolded, different experiences and interests emerged in the group, which raised questions about the identity of 'citymakers' as an anchor for collective action.

### **The practice of inclusion: intersectional approaches**

Methods for researching intersecting inequalities therefore need to engage with the complexity of individual experiences; and to enable these subjective accounts to be communicated to the wider group of inquirers. In particular, creative, visual and embodied methods can reveal experience that is made invisible by wider structures of exclusion, such as discriminatory social norms, to become more visible. Within a facilitated PAR process, this can build understanding and acceptance of difference, as well as recognition of similarities. From here, capacities for collective action can be generated. At the same time, these methodologies contribute to community building because an individual output such as a drawing, photo or personal story is generated, interrogated and shared through a group context. Alternatively, a video story, drama or documentary is recorded that incorporates the ideas and creative input from all group members. Meaning making and critical analysis take place through collective sense-making within the group, and that in turn can involve further production of creative outputs to communicate insights, perspectives or messages to an external audience. Finally, these methodologies generate the possibility of change because participants can bring their analysis

into external spaces, which can prompt dialogue with the wider community, external stakeholders or decision makers.

In the next section, we trace two examples of such processes. The first example describes a storytelling-based PAR approach to exploring issues of nationality, migration, race and belonging in South Africa. The second, describes the use of participatory video and narrative construction methodologies to explore issues of gender and urban precarity, with predominately Dalit 'Citymakers' in India – street- or slum-dwellers, or people driven from the urban spaces they have occupied for generations by slum clearance. In both cases, we used visual and creative methods, including participatory video (Shaw 2015, 2017) and transformative story work (Wheeler et al 2018). These processes, taking place in contested contexts of power imbalances and unaccountable or inadequate governance, required navigating tensions between interests. We reflect on how the tensions and practice challenges played out at the micro-level, between being difference/power-aware alongside building collective agendas and action, and consider the value that an intersectional lens brings to PAR and to community development processes.

## **Examples from practice**

### **Example one: Migration, Storytelling and Social Divides in South Africa**

#### *Context*

In South Africa, lines are being drawn between who belongs and who does not. In recent political discourse, the migrant 'other' is blamed for a host of social ills (Misago, 2015; Chingwete, 2016). Xenophobic marches and everyday violence against foreigners co-exist with deep dissatisfaction with the lack of transformation post-apartheid that promised an inclusive 'rainbow nation' (Tizora, 2016). Under apartheid, the South African government actively separated groups by constructing racial categories, and pitted these groups against one another in order to oppress people of colour. The complex consequences of historical and current injustices emerge through everyday life in Cape Town: twenty years since the end of apartheid, the city is still largely geographically segregated by historical racial categories, with differential

access to education, health care, leisure, transport and employment. Inequalities also play out through daily interactions and everyday racism, and acutely affect refugees and asylum seekers (Landau, 2012).

We used storytelling to try to understand and bridge social divisions within Cape Town, and explore storytelling as a way of challenging narratives or imposed 'identities' which stereotype and invisibilise certain experiences. This required researchers and participants to reflect on and analyse differences in power and positionality within the research group, as well as in wider society. The example explores how this unfolded and the practical tensions and challenges that emerged.

#### *Intersectional Participatory Research in Practice*

In Cape Town, in November 2018, I (Wheeler) began to work with a group of eleven people who identify as refugees or asylum seekers, and work with Adonis Musati Project, a local civil society organisation, providing psycho-social services to refugees and migrants. In January 2019, I convened a second group of migrants (South Africans and others from Africa, Europe, and North and South America) that came to Cape Town through their own choice, or from a relative position of privilege. Both groups included women and men, a range of nationalities of origin, ages, sexualities and other differences. The intention was to create the possibility of meaningful dialogue between the groups, through developing and exchanging stories about everyday experiences of living in Cape Town. The storytelling and dialogue process was designed to allow questioning of wider narratives of exclusion, while recognising the complexity of intersecting inequalities within the groups. Both groups developed in-depth digital personal stories, working from the prompt: *'Tell a story about a time when you felt you were at home or not at home in Cape Town. What happened?'*

The storytelling method was iterative, creative and collective. Each participant produced their own short personal story, eventually recording and producing it in a digital format (Wheeler, Shahrokh and Derakhshani, 2018). The groups then came together to watch each other's stories

and to discuss their reactions. We considered why the issues in the stories emerged, and how these experiences could be shifted. Using their stories and their own analysis of the issues, we collectively designed a public dialogue event, a pop-up story salon, which we held on World Refugee Day in June 2019. This event was a mixture between an installation and an exhibition—it allowed the stories to set the basis for deeper listening by visitors, and then used one-to-one conversations between the storytellers and visitors to delve into difficult questions. At each stage, the research process aimed to generate a discussion that goes beyond the dominant narratives to surface experiences and knowledge that are often invisible in those wider narratives, and to maintain an intersectional approach to PAR.

The process of storytelling unfolded as intersectional participatory research first by surfacing invisibilised or hidden experiences and knowledge, maintaining the connection between these experiences and an awareness of identities and inequalities through questioning names and labels. Using an intersectionality lens in this way helps participants work backwards by analysing imposed labels to better understand how systems of oppression are created, perpetuated and internalized and how these labels relate to their positioning in the research process and in society. Second, this process of surfacing and naming experiences of inequality led to challenging discriminatory labels. This required us to reflect on and analyse differences in power and positionality within the research process itself, as well as wider society.

#### *Challenging labels by surfacing experiences of intersecting inequality*

I did not introduce intersectionality directly as a concept to the research group, but used it to inform the design of the research process, and specifically the storytelling approach. This approach aimed to enable participants to make sense of their own and others' experiences in a way that maintains the complexity of identities and belonging in intersectional approach. For example, we started the storytelling process by surfacing labels emerging from dominant narratives, and then used the storytelling process to challenge these labels, going beyond and beneath them to recognise more subtle, and complex forms of naming. This was enabled through

storytelling which, as an open-ended and creative process, allows experiences to emerge and be shaped through the process of listening, reflection and creative expression.

‘Refugee’ was an obvious and problematic label in the South African context, reinforced by the way I framed the research. The storytelling approach allowed the label of refugee to be challenged by first surfacing experiences of inequality masked by this label. Participants related their experiences in terms that went beyond the label, challenging assumptions that might exist about what it means to be a refugee. Several participants had professional qualifications in their countries of origin, which were erased by being named ‘refugee’, which suggests someone asking for help rather than someone with something to offer. Others had gone through challenging experiences before arriving in South Africa and claiming refugee status. Some had literally walked through seven or eight countries, living in different camps. Many had lost most or all of their family, and had survived extreme forms of violence—and some of the worst violence was in South Africa, itself. Many stories reflected their pain at being named as ‘refugees’ by their communities, the state, and in the media. The label of refugee was for many a name they needed to get legal status to stay, but also a source of shame and weakness. Alongside the label of ‘refugee’, issues emerged around expectations of masculinity (to be strong, to provide, etc.), which combined with others of class/social positioning (coming from positions of relative privilege before moving to South Africa, and the loss of this status on arrival). The added value of an intersectional approach is to keep these different aspects of positionality in play as stories unfold, surfacing experiences hidden by the label of refugee.

#### *Power and intersectionality in practice*

A second aspect of the research process was around how to challenge labels, by keeping an intersectional focus on the nature of knowledge and the experience of power in the research process. Valuing different forms of knowledge made more space for the emotions and experiences of intersecting inequalities to be expressed and heard. To illustrate, speaking or writing the name of ‘refugee’ was not enough to challenge the label. We created space for different representations of names— acted out, represented with symbols through art, or

communicated through objects. These techniques allowed different kinds of knowledge to be valued in how names can be challenged. In a drama about one story, participants made labels (which read 'black', 'white', 'foreigner' etc.) and held them in front of their faces to prevent anyone from talking to them. As the drama unfolded, these names were mocked because they could not be removed. Eventually the paper names were ripped up, symbolizing how the names were preventing interaction. Drama and other techniques that use movement, symbolism, and creative expression allow different forms of knowledge to surface. These approaches allowed storytellers to play with the names, mock them, claim them or reject them and to decide if they should be spoken or not. Storytelling was a process of experimenting with names to make sense of them, but also to decide how to use them or challenge them. By the end of the process, as we watched the stories together, the names were no longer what seemed to matter—it was the meaning behind them that spoke; the nuances, contradictions and complexity that is beyond the name. This process is emotionally charged, and it is important to use appropriate methods for surfacing and expressing these emotions. In this case, the physical act of ripping up names was cathartic as a group activity. In a place where so many experiences of exclusion are made invisible, storytelling about those experiences takes away some of their power over the storyteller by challenging the names that obscure the complexity of intersecting inequalities. While there were differences between individual experiences as expressed through the stories, the group process created the space for a collective act of rejecting negative labels.

The tendency is for any PAR process to replicate wider power dynamics, because the group process is not outside of the social reality in which it takes place. Therefore, the challenge for taking an intersectional approach to PAR is how to recognise and directly engage these dynamics within the research process. For example, when the two storytelling groups came together to watch each other's stories there were moments where the existing and dominant power relations and social positioning came to the fore. As we watched the stories together, some of those with more privilege felt shame as their stories sat alongside those of the 'refugee' group. Some struggled to acknowledge this privilege, as it was more comfortable to focus on commonalities and not confront that differential privilege. The recognition of certain unexpected

commonalities between the groups, such as the experience of bullying of children in school, was coupled with a sense of deep injustice around how privilege allows us to respond differently to similar problems (e.g. a middle class parent was able to withdraw child from school to escape a bullying problem, while a refugee mother has to struggle to keep her child in school in spite of bullying).

As a researcher, I had to face my own privilege as a foreign, white woman in South Africa. There are names and meanings associated with this (such as ‘white saviour’) and I had to recognise the power of these names and my own use of power in the process. I had to challenge how I was named and how I interacted with participants, be aware of existing assumptions about whiteness and privilege, and how I could inadvertently reinforce, or actively move away from them. In many ways, I shared the same privileges as the second group—I was a migrant in South Africa by choice and this gave me economic freedom and security that was deeply unfair in comparison to the group of refugees and asylum seekers.

In taking an intersectional approach, I tried to use continual awareness of in-group inequalities to encourage the recognition of these differences and commonalities, so that they could be discussed openly. While this approach goes some way in mitigating the reification of these power dynamics, it is never fully able to do so given the depth and breadth of intersecting inequalities. And yet, this process also showed how deliberately engaging intersectionality through a storytelling and dialogue-orientated approach created some opportunities to challenge inequalities.

In conclusion, this case shows how an intersectional research process can be painful and difficult; it implicates the researcher and participants in the dynamics of power and knowledge in deeply personal ways, and requires critical attention to position and privilege throughout. Yet this approach also allows deeper engagement, by finding and surfacing the complexities behind the label or name, and creating a space for challenging superficial categories (such as ‘refugee’ or ‘vulnerable’ or ‘poor’). The stories about belonging demonstrated how people are simultaneously included and excluded in different moments, spaces and interactions - storytelling allows an

articulation of these contradictory subjective and intersectional experiences. The two aspects of this intersectional approach to participatory research: surfacing and recognising hidden or invisible knowledge, linked to challenging labels connected to negative stereotypes, reinforce one another. The next section considers another example of intersectional PAR.

### **Example two: Claiming identities, space and influence: participatory video with Citymakers in Chennai**

#### *Context*

In India, neo-liberal economic development has benefited some, but lives have often worsened for the most excluded people (Burns et al 2013). In urban settings, politicians have pursued slum-free 'global cities' through dubious promises to compensate people living in street dwellings for withdrawing their claims to urban space, whilst forcefully re-locating them into ghettos which lack basic services and transport links. Those who resist re-settlement face deliberate fires, prejudice, and active challenges to their right to remain (Praxis 2013).

Praxis is an Indian NGO specialising in participatory practice and community-led change (see Bharatwaj et al, this issue). Since 2007, Praxis has worked with diverse urban groups including those identified as 'Citymakers'; people facing precarious lives as street or slum-dwellers, or driven from their homes during slum clearance. Citymakers have varied occupations: for example, as domestic servants, porters, city cleaners, labourers, street vendors, security staff, rickshaw drivers, sex workers and beggars. Citymakers was chosen as identifier to affirm their role in servicing the city, despite not reaping economic benefits, and being dispossessed, criminalised or highly stigmatised (Praxis 2013). Praxis' longer-term engagement with Citymakers in Chennai and Delhi, has included participatory research, case-studies, ground-level panels, and national/global policy dialogue. During this, I (Shaw) collaborated with Praxis to extend their research and policy influencing through participatory video with the Chennai Citymakers.

'Citymakers' seems a constructive identity to drive mobilisation around urban governance but, like any grouping, the dynamics reflected intersectional differences between people. Here, I focus on the added value of an 'intersecting inequalities' approach to video-mediated PAR

processes, in revealing intersectional complexity, and navigating the inherent tension between building inclusion and collective agency.

### *Methodological approach*

The Chennai Citymakers engagement began with an 8-day participatory video process involving 10 participants from three urban contexts: a street-dwelling community based in the Parris commercial district; Ambedkar Colony, an 'objectionable' slum (official term meaning the authorities want to remove it for reasons of 'safety, health and morals' (Praxis 2013); and Kannagi Nager - tenements 40 km outside Chennai that house relocated slum-dwellers. The group had a 50:50 split between men and women; a range of ages and livelihoods; people with little/no education; and those qualified without employment. There are no demographic data for the 70,000 people relocated in Kannagi Nager, but the majority (80% plus) of the Parris' homeless community and Chennai slum-dwellers are Dalits or from tribal groups, which was reflected in our cohort.

Participatory video began with facilitated video exercises, in combination with other participatory activities (e.g mapping, theme clustering, story-telling, and image-making), in order to prompt sharing of experiences, reflection on issues, and group sense-making. Participant sub-groups, divided by living context, next storyboarded a narrative about how problems can/have been tackled in their localities. We spent a day recording at each site, and afterwards Praxis supported the group to edit a film. This combined narrative, and the three separate stories, were later incorporated into research outputs for national and global policy events. Full details of the activities are beyond the scope here. Next, I consider the methodological contributions and challenges of applying participatory video in this context.

### *Intersectional Participatory Research in Practice*

This section illustrates how intersectional PAR evolved through the video-mediated processes. The intersectional lens was approached as a way of sensitising practitioners to the wider power

dynamics reflected at the micro-level, and I discuss the contribution of videoing activities in amplifying and addressing these power differentials to build inclusive group dynamics. However, this project did not set out to explore intersectional differences amongst Citymakers, but to generate collective action. As the activities progressed, the nuances between Citymakers' experiences, arising from the intersections of gender, age, caste, and place, became apparent. This clarified the tensions inherent in using PAR processes to build collective identities, and that navigation between individual and group focus is both a necessary methodological contribution, and an ongoing practice dilemma.

### ***Navigating the intersectional issues of gender and age during group-building***

PAR processes that neglect intersecting inequalities are likely to perpetuate systemic power imbalances as they play out through group interactions (Howard et al 2018). To tackle this, participatory video is well-evidenced for building inclusive dynamics and the agency of marginalised participants (Shaw 2016). Structured video recording and playback involved all the Citymakers taking turns to both speak on camera and use the equipment. As their expressive confidence increased, presentational, technical and narrative capacities also grew through further videoing activities:

*I don't even know how to read or write. And now.... telling people our problems on video.*

*We are ... very proud!*

### **Women from Ambedhkar Colony**

However, the increased sense of 'can-do' that these uneducated Dalit women reported is not afforded by the technology, but the practitioner's relational skills in mediating inclusion through video (Shaw and Robertson 1997, Shaw 2017). Further, because camera control can amplify power, part of the methodological contribution is revealing within-group dynamics, and providing the means to shift them productively. This in turn raises an unavoidable practice tension between group-building and responding to differing individuals needs – in this case due to gender and age. To illustrate, one young male Citymaker repeatedly attempted to take over the camera when it was a woman's turn. A Praxis facilitator took him to one side:

*I explained that what he was doing, was like other people did to him when opportunities were barred due to stigma, and assured he would get his fair share of turns*

**Praxis facilitator**

Practitioners often need to intervene assertively to ensure inclusion of the least dominant (here the younger and older women) especially in more heterogeneous groups, and this young man's energy was re-channelled through involving him in monitoring equitable turn-taking. Nevertheless, having experienced many knock-backs as a Dalit, he could have felt undermined. An intersectional lens assists practitioners' ongoing reflection about the balance between using their influence to foster democratic space, and building agency differentially. Whilst intersectionality was not explicitly introduced to the Citymakers, this example illustrates how facilitated video processes enable a collaborative dynamic, which can help group-members become more effective change agents.

### ***Surfacing intersectional issues of place and gender through narrative construction and participatory film-making***

It made sense to storyboard separate narratives from the three Citymaker living sites because people faced distinctive circumstances. Visual methods like participatory video are considered suitable for generating tacit knowledge about an issue (Shaw 2020), and notably, it was the dynamics experienced during fieldwork recording which revealed differing emotional aspects in each context. Contrary to the assumption that the homeless community must be worst off, the reverse was so. The street-dwellers face tough conditions, but many were relatively in control of their lives, with regular work, and participants were energized through working together to secure electricity and pension provision. By comparison, the re-located residents felt frustrated and hopeless about their lost livelihoods, inadequate services, rising alcoholism and sexual abuse. This emotional knowledge was palpable at Kannagi Nager where many furious people arrived to express their views on video.

These spontaneous fieldwork interactions also generated insight into gendered experiences. Whilst everyone highlighted poor services, men focused on the difficulty of finding work due to being stigmatised and criminalised by location; women in all contexts emphasised sexual harassment, and their children's safety. It was crucial that the participatory video was part of Praxis' longer-term engagement, so that people could use this knowledge in advocating for themselves. However, responding practically to the varying motivations in the highly-charged and less-controllable fieldwork settings was tricky. I now discuss why adaption to emergent tensions is an ongoing practice aspect, and the implications for intersectional community development.

### ***Ongoing critical reflection on researcher and participant positionality***

As an external consultant, I was accompanying Praxis practitioners in facilitating their first participatory video process. As a foreign, white woman this generated some positioning 'conflicts'. First, gender dynamics at Kannagi Nager and Parrys meant local men joined in, and some attempted to direct or take-over from the women camera-operators. The Praxis team were both men, and being inexperienced in the gendered aspects of supporting equipment usage, stood back to let the community members self-organise. This was a moment where the status quo of dynamics could be shifted or re-enforced, so I stepped in to ensure continued space for the women, but this conflicted with my role nurturing local facilitators. I was uncomfortable as a white European, visibly intervening in this Indian project, but felt that I needed to stand alongside the local Dalit women as they recorded, to maintain their active participation. We reflected afterwards, and I and the Praxis team refined our roles.

Second, whilst video-making can position participants more influentially (Shaw 2017), there is a connected risk of negative public reactions. I was accompanying one woman filming at Parrys, when a shopkeeper rushed out to berate us angrily. He did not believe the Dalit street-dwellers were authoring their own video, and was 'fed up with Europeans presenting India negatively'. The camera-woman retorted that, despite running a business opposite the make-shift shelters for many years, he had never acknowledged them. Whilst he may also have been unsettled by

seeing a Dalit woman camera operator, I was again confronted by my positioning as a white foreigner, and the difficult balance between using and abusing privilege. I stood back as the group explained, but I did not feel powerful, and the shopkeeper was only placated by the male practitioners. Certainly interactions would have been different without my presence, hence the importance of local facilitators.

### ***The tension between building collective identities and addressing intersecting inequalities***

Praxis selected a mixed Citymaker group as their aim was collective mobilisation to leverage governance responsiveness. Participants had different intersectional experiences, but group analysis focused on similarities across context. Praxis concluded that the urban realities were not distinct; with a continuum from street- and slum- dwelling to forced relocation, and the video material was combined as one collective narrative to help forge the Citymaker identity.

However, a methodological contribution of the participatory video processes was to enable *differing* experiences to emerge, and important emotional insights into the drivers and barriers to change which would not have surfaced without the spatial focus. This indicates the danger of homogenising difference in not maintaining the three video narratives, or losing subjective unrecorded knowledge, which was observed and documented in field notes, but harder to capture on video. In response, I ensured these intersectional insights were incorporated in the research analysis. However, the intersectional approach challenged the coherence of the Citymaker collective identity, and could be interpreted as constraining the typical PAR aim of generating collective action.

In conclusion, a key value of this methodological approach was to clearly expose the underlying tension between building collective identities and reinforcing inequitable dynamics. Neglecting it would have created the conditions for divisions to erupt later, which is a key risk of community processes which are not intersectionally aware. Somewhat counter-intuitively, if supported sensitively and progressively, surfacing difference can enable people to better understand each other, improve dynamics, mitigate simplistic essentialism, and lay the foundation for more

enduring bonds. Indeed, there is some evidence that increased intersectional awareness can increase collective identification and action across difference, and this is an added value of intersectional PAR.

### **Conclusion 800 854**

One way in which the politics of exclusion embeds itself is by creating simplified labels and damaging narratives which stigmatise certain groups of people in relationship to dominant/hegemonic norms and dynamics. These labels can function to turn people against each other, undermining their potential to unite across difference to challenge injustice. The case studies have highlighted several important aspects of the practice and politics of inclusion through intersectional participatory research. First, we have shown how PAR processes using storytelling and an intersectional lens, offer spaces and approaches that enable people to listen to each other, to critically analyse damaging labels/narratives, and challenge stereotypes through nuanced exploration. Second, the examples show the complexity and importance of recognising different forms of knowledge and experience within the research process and beyond. Finally, the examples make the case for extended PAR processes which progress through iterative cycles of explorative action and reflection, to find ways of collaborating across difference. Looking across these three areas of inclusive practice, we draw together some of the implications.

### ***Narratives and practices of inclusion***

Focusing on the complexities of intersectionality and intersecting inequalities can be challenging. Both cases showed how existing hierarchies (such as those related to gender, race, nationality, caste, etc.) played out within the research process. Simply being aware of and describing these inequalities is insufficient for sustained and meaningful changes to intransigent dynamics. Instead, we have tried to engage directly with them through the research process itself. As well as taking time to allow complexities to surface and trust to develop, these creative and storytelling approaches deliberately draw on different techniques to unsettle prevailing social dynamics and value diverse forms of knowledge. Playfulness (as used in the storytelling approach) can subvert existing power relations, encourage accessible forms of knowledge generation, and give space for complex experiences of intersecting inequalities to emerge.

Structured video recording and playback exercises help build alternative narratives, as they involve people in listening intently to each other, and identifying commonalities. This kind of social interaction stimulates reflection, which develops both individual agency and the potential for collective action (Cohen and Mullender 2006). As the cases have demonstrated, in disrupting power relations these processes have inherent risks, and trigger emotions in participants and practitioners that need attention.

### ***The role of the researcher as facilitator***

In intersectional PAR, the role of the researcher/practitioner cannot be merely to observe, or to solicit and record data. Instead, it is largely about facilitating and managing emotional knowledge within the process. Knowledge is generated through the interactional dynamics as well as the 'data' produced, i.e. stories and video material. Working in this way requires that researchers/practitioners think critically not only about navigating the power imbalances between participants, but also their own motivations and positioning. In practice terms, this means ongoing reflection on how to foster participants' agendas and ideas, whilst progressively stepping back as group agency evolves (Shaw 2016). Particularly when using approaches that involve technology, such as participatory video or digital storytelling, researchers need more than production knowledge. Crucially, they need to be very sensitive to interpersonal and contextual dynamics that arise, and how they can be negotiated inclusively. Supporting individual and group reflection on intersecting inequalities that enables different kinds of knowledge to be heard, while seeking common purpose, is a tricky dance in which the researcher/facilitator must constantly reflect on her own and others' power in the dynamic.

### ***Implications for community development***

International development practitioners and policymakers are searching for approaches that can ensure that 'no-one is left behind', and inclusion has long been a focus for community development. The intersectional PAR approach discussed here offers some insights at community level into how to develop an 'inclusive reflex' (Shaw et al this issue). This means that the group takes shape through a dynamic which iteratively questions who is present and why, whose voice

is heard, whose experience is acknowledged, and works with and through the different aspects of identity and power in play. Sometimes, this means working with a homogenous group (e.g. only women) to enable them to work through their own differences before engaging with the wider community. Other times, groups can be deliberately brought together to explore their different experiences, but time and careful thought are needed to ensure appropriate tools and techniques are available to maintain inclusion given the power differentials, and ease tensions as they become visible. As researchers/practitioners, we must learn to use our considerable influence in the research process to keep the space open for a more intersectional approach, but also to focus on what matters to those involved in the research and be ready to cede control to them. This is more likely to lead to grounded research with findings of consequence to the participants, which they can use to address pressing issues. Most importantly, there are key contributions to community development in taking an intersectional approach to PAR. Shifting power relations to generate inclusive dynamics is a form of capacity-building, which can generate effective collaboration and therefore increased collective agency. Building greater awareness across difference provides a more solid foundation for collective action, which is more likely to be sustained.

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