

Case Study: Indigenous Engagement, Research Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilisation

GCRF-Funded Research Network:

Sumak Kawsay and the Sustainable Development Agenda: Critical Perspectives and Creative Responses from a Latin American Indigenous Perspective

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Executive Summary

This case study provides a critical reflection on the experiences of research engagement between non-indigenous academics and indigenous communities in Brazil and Colombia who came together to create a research network focusing on indigenous formulations of alternatives to development.

The network was designed to allow academic and indigenous team members to work on an equitable basis to explore the topic in question. Indeed, the research was carried out in and by the indigenous communities themselves, with contributions from academic network members intended to add relevant support where requested.

While improvements may be made to the way the network has worked as an equitable and respectful indigenous/academic partnership between the specific individuals involved, there are also significant systemic barriers in the research funding ecosystem that severely impede initiatives for equitable engagement with indigenous communities. These must be addressed by both the UKRI and the academic institutions administering the funding as a matter of urgency.

Systemic barriers to equitable engagement with indigenous communities include:

- extremely time-consuming, and at times insulting, bureaucratic processes

¹ Indigenous contributors are indicated by first name only, and their indigenous community on first mention. We have acknowledged their contributions in this way in order to limit their exposure to threats of violence or any other harmful consequences of participation in this research.

- too little acknowledgement of the central importance of trust and solidarity in indigenous communities and too much emphasis on documentation and liability
- too much focus on outputs and too little on processes
- structural injustices caused by requirements to spend 50% of funding in UK and limitations on how non-academic organisations and groups can be engaged (at only 80% FEC)
- accounting mechanisms that are designed for capital-driven economies rather than communities where many goods are shared and exchanged without money, let alone receipts
- the assumption that research partners should put their own resources up front to support projects
- limitations on the types of outside services that can be contracted to support a research project that deny indigenous knowledge and support/safety structures
- divisive hierarchical language for different roles used in the funding literature: eg. academic 'investigators' versus indigenous 'project partners'.

These barriers have put academic team members in a very difficult position with respect to their commitment to indigenous team members, and to their institutional roles and responsibilities.

Areas that indigenous team members felt evidenced **successful partnership practices** include:

- the importance of personal relationships and bonds of trust underpinning the network
- taking time to do things in ethical and transparent ways
- resilience and determination evidenced during the project to overcome obstacles
- the importance of participating in the research network to achieve greater visibility.

There is evidence of **preliminary knowledge mobilisation** through and beyond the network by indigenous community members. Pending resolution of the systemic issues experienced, all contributors to the case study agreed that they would consider participating in future research projects.

Our recommendations for future research engagement between (UKRI-funded) academics and indigenous communities are primarily focused on the need for:

- substantial revision to key political and technical aspects of GCRF and UKRI grant design and management stipulations; as well as recognition of:
- the important role played by affective relationships underpinning such research
- the need to devote sufficient time to conduct processes ethically, and for knowledge co-creation
- the diversity of languages and cultures of collaboration and the need to mitigate against linguistic and cultural exclusion.

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'In Brazil the word partnership is often empty. It's just a badge to wear.'

(Potyra, Tupinambá)

Introduction

This report provides a critical reflection on our network's practice and real world experiences of research (networking) engagements, between non-indigenous academics and indigenous communities. Reflections focus on drawing clear learning from our experiences, with agreed conclusions presented. These have been co-produced through discussion amongst the indigenous and non-indigenous partners in our network. The report content, however, rests entirely on commentary from indigenous contributors' responses during focussed reflection meetings, as well as evidence from WhatsApp groups related to the management of the project.² Further analysis focuses this commentary into suggested 'future directions'.

Note on processes

Our discussions were conducted multilingually, with language support where necessary. They were audio recorded with permission, and provide the report with verbatim expression of community members' perspectives. The final report will be translated into Spanish and Portuguese so that it can be shared with those who contributed to its content.

Background: Our network, project aims and approach

Our research network focuses on a critical approach to indigenous-origin discourses of 'good living' (sumak kawsay, buen vivir, bem viver) that have been widely promoted in the region as alternatives to Western development models, sustainable or otherwise. It brings together indigenous communities in South Western Colombia via an independent initiative to network projects of resistance and autonomy between peoples and processes (Pueblos en Camino), indigenous communities in North Eastern Brazil via an indigenous-rights NGO in Brazil

² The requirements of this report were for its co-production 'in collaboration with partners in indigenous communities' and foregrounding of 'the experiences and perspectives of indigenous communities in the research process'. In order to keep close to the word limit, this has led to a certain Manicheism of 'non-indigenous academics' versus 'indigenous community members'. To be clear, the reality in which we have worked is much more nuanced than this. The divisions between indigenous/non-indigenous or academic/community members are very much blurred. We had several indigenous academics involved in our network, as well as several non-indigenous people living and working with the indigenous communities to such an extent that such separations between indigenous and non-indigenous or academic and non-academic perspectives are untenable and unhelpful.

(Thydêwá), the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, the Universidad Autónoma de Occidente in Cali, Colombia, and two UK universities (Leeds and Bristol). The network was designed to allow academic and indigenous team members to work on an equitable basis to explore the topic in question. Indeed, the intellectual fulcrum of the network resides with the indigenous communities themselves, with contributions from academic network members designed to add relevant/requested support.³

This case study focuses on the exploration of gaps and issues, as well as lessons to be learned from this attempt to create an equitable research partnership. This inevitably extends to issues of negotiating different or difficult agendas including inequalities in ‘power’ and conflicts between ‘western’ ideas (eg. ‘development models’) and local knowledges. Subjects for discussion included: how to confront irreducible institutional power and dominance across the network; accommodate fundamentally different conceptualisations of ethics in practice; overcome challenges in expectations of transparency; unpack differentiated roles and responsibilities; and negotiate dynamics of fragile trust in commitment, positionings and representation.

Contributing to conceptual development and good practice, the report seeks to identify key issues affecting engagements between academics and indigenous communities which, despite good will, most clearly hamper such engagement. Local insight provides analysis and interpretation of the dynamics observed and experienced, and indigenous knowledges provide suggestions for co-conceiving better practices, to help avoid resulting pitfalls.

KEY CHALLENGES

1. Time, money, and systemic failures

- The project had a very a difficult start, with preliminary bureaucratic tasks creating long delays, bad feeling and damage to the relationships on which the research network relies.
- While many projects may experience initial set-up problems, these raise specific challenges in engagements between academics and indigenous communities.
- We believe issues relating to inflexibilities in the funding stipulations present a central ethical and political challenge to such research engagements.
- This is not just because of the obvious strain these processes put on people’s time, good will, and health, but specifically also because of the resonances with historical oppressions, and amplifications through the current political context for indigenous groups.
- There is too little acknowledgement of the role that trust and solidarity play in indigenous communities and too much emphasis on documentation and liability.

³ Some indigenous members of the research network expressed discomfort with using the term ‘network’, arguing that considerable groundwork needs to be conducted before such a thing can be said to exist. They would have been more comfortable with talking in terms of a research group or collaborative research initiative. We have maintained the term ‘network’ here since it is part of the lexicon of the funding environment. However, questions of terminology and the speed at which things can be expected to advance in terms of establishing genuine relationships with communities would also be worth further deliberation.

- Funders do not allow enough time to approach research ethically – the tendency is outputs-focussed engagement that unhelpfully echoes extractivist colonial practices.

The 14-month proposed timescale attempted to create maximum scope, with very limited budgets, for essential stages: formal partnership set-up processes (3 months); networking activities in communities (5 months+); joint encounters in each country (months 8, 10, 12); planning and co-creating project outputs (by completion). Following the September 2017 notification of approval, a series of stipulated bureaucratic processes followed. These all involved relentless communications, across language and cultural barriers, between all the partner organisations. In reality the first 6 months were completely absorbed by administrative tasks, with local community activities not possible until May, a full 7 months into the 14-month plan. Problematic hurdles included the following: Complex and protracted partner agreement contracts (finally completed in month 11); the onerous, invasive, and culturally offensive ‘Due Diligence’ processes (finally completed in month 7); a requirement for our partners to be ‘set up as “vendors”’ in the University of Leeds financial system, (by month 7); the time-consuming transfer of funds from one institution to another and consequent set-up delays at the other end.

Misunderstandings and breached cultural sensitivities meant reshaping and repeating many steps, and this built further frustration and embarrassment, as well as delays. Months of project time and good will for the project were lost to these processes. Further insult was caused by inflexible institutional procedures, e.g. expecting a named activist volunteering significant working time to the project to sign a long legal contract to this effect. Embryonic trust between academic and indigenous partners nurtured during the development of the proposal was severely jeopardised by these bureaucratic systems.

2. Structural injustices with unethical outcomes

- UKRI GCRF rules on conditions of partnership disallow – and thus discriminate against – small independent (non-constituted) organisations as partners.
- This logic is at odds with, and excludes, indigenous forms of organisation. Ancestral structures of self-governance are not formally recognised (nor constituted) by states.
- UKRI logic thus excludes virtually all indigenous communities from participation, except via a local institution/university. The logic also creates internal tension within the GCRF aims: It sets in conflict the aims of prioritising local indigenous partnerships versus strengthening international academic networks in GCRF countries.
- The administrative incompatibilities of working with indigenous partners through a local university partnership are absurd (see below). Both UK and local institutions require their procedures to be followed. Meanwhile their incompatibility multiplies the workload, and blockages delay the release of funds for activity still further.

- The situation creates invidious additional oppressions for indigenous team members who have no other option – short of changing their own organisational structure and culture, or abandoning the project – but to enact partnership in this ‘nested’ way.
- Direct partnerships with NGOs are less onerous; but here the logic of partnership criteria is again flawed. Budget allocations to smaller independent organisations *with* formal NGO status, enabling their direct involvement as partners, are funded at only 80% of the full amount. The UK host University must cover the missing 20%, and partnerships with such NGOs in GCRF-eligible countries thus cost the UK host university more than partnerships with Universities in the same overseas countries. This presents a disincentive within the existing system to partner with NGOs directly.

In Brazil our project was co-developed with an indigenous-rights NGO, Thydêwá, enabling direct partnership. In Colombia the partner organisation was an independent initiative, Pueblos en Camino (PEC). However, PEC is non-constituted, and so not eligible under the rules to be a stand-alone partner. The partnership was thus arranged via the local Universidad Autónoma del Oriente (UAO) in Cali, which was able to receive and manage the project funds. UAO then contracted the local project co-ordinator. In this nested partnership arrangement, the local indigenous project coordinator became badly caught between bureaucratic requirements of the UK host institution and those of the local Colombian institution, each subject to complex protocols with very different logics. Delays in the project set-up meant severe delays in provision of funds for activities and the co-ordinator’s own salary. However, the local community activity needed to start before these incompatibilities between systems had been resolved causing debts for the PEC team. All this meant that the coordinator became trapped in a systemic dilemma over which she had no control. The effect on the project was noted by other community members: *‘The huge workload at the beginning, with so much paperwork and bureaucracy, and accepting that way of doing things, continuing in these terms, made the balance disastrous for us – it wasted our time, we wanted to achieve so much more with it.’* (Rubén, Nasa)

3. Cultural incompatibilities, territorial insecurity, impacts on indigenous team members

- UK university accounting procedures are inequitable, requiring resources to be accessible in advance to enable expenditure, which is then reclaimed.
- It is unrealistic to expect that indigenous communities will have resources accessible to commit to research projects, or that they will find this way of working acceptable.
- Within both UK and Colombian systems, the ‘audit via presentation of receipts’ is culturally incompatible with indigenous communities’ ways of working.
- ‘Receipts’ are an alienating mechanism which monetises ‘contributions’ that the community makes reciprocally and without use of money, thus causing internal community frictions.
- Standard practice in Latin America – considered transparent and ethical - is to use a regulated ‘per diem’ system to pay expenses where putting own money up front and then

gathering receipts for reimbursement are not a reasonable expectation. It also lessens the bureaucratic load for those charged with accounting for expenditure. This system must be allowed in these kinds of projects.

- Institutional requirements to use specific types of companies as service providers – those set up on the finance system – violate project ethics, i) by invalidating the local indigenous systems for providing support needed for activities – informally, autonomously and communally, and at times based on fundamental security considerations; and ii) by multiplying costs and reducing the amount of project activity achievable.
- Security considerations must not be minimised in this work. Many indigenous territories face the daily threat of violence, including murder, from groups seeking to intimidate them into leaving their territory. Indigenous communities are thus focused on the primary task of fighting for their very survival. Partners and collaborating institutions must be aware of this, and not compound problems with systemic inflexibilities.

Vilma's story (as representative of PEC): The case of our local indigenous project coordinator in Colombia is illustrative here. Project delays had already had significant impact on her ability to plan her work commitments. The problems in international bureaucratic set-up in turn delayed the extended protocols in Colombia for issuing her contract. It was ultimately 10 months into project before she received her first salary payment. However, Vilma and the PEC team had already discussed the project schedule within the indigenous community, agreeing involvement and plans. These formed a significant part of the community's collectively agreed calendar of activities. With a strong commitment to her community and to these agreements, and on the basis of trust in the integrity of the individual network members (academics from the UK host institution and the local Colombian university), she began working on activities months before receiving any salary.

The following verbatim quotes give a sense of the problems Vilma faced in dealing with institutional bureaucracy:

- Following instructions from the UK host university, Vilma was already grappling with the incompatibility with indigenous community organising culture: *'For example allocating expenses for milk – it's not about the "cost" of a bottle of milk, it comes from the cow, and how do you put a price on this? Then food, cooking – how do you cost up a community cooking event? It's impossible to get receipted evidence, it doesn't make sense!'*
- Reconciling UK advance expenditure and reimbursement with Colombian pre-order/authorisation, then audit by validated receipt, absorbed Vilma in long hours of paperwork and stress: *'The system was to submit an estimated budget a month before expenditure, and you can't then change plans after the estimate for expenses has gone in!'*
- The Colombian financial stipulations also required all services to be ordered from registered companies. This would render the project activity financially unviable, with commercial companies costing five times as much as local providers: *'What's worrying*

me is that the University is expecting us to use their companies for all the travel. If that's how it is, there's no way we'll be able to achieve what we've planned. Just imagining how much it would cost using an institutional transport company for the trip between Santander de Quilichao and Pioya is making my head hurt..' (Using services offered by local community members to transport people up the mountain track would save the project three million pesos (approximately £750) each time. Furthermore, and crucially, indigenous leaders also consider using local drivers, who know the dangerous road and the community intimately, much safer than hiring a company from the city.)

- The previous and following quotes are verbatim extracts from 110 extended WhatsApp communications (written and audio) exchanged between Vilma and project partners over 4 days, from 6-9 in July 2018, seeking solutions to intractable problems. On 6 July alone, 50 such messages, and numerous emails were exchanged, demonstrating the level of stress and anxiety Vilma was under: *'The bureaucratic procedures are keeping us captive, tying us up completely while our people are being murdering out there! That's how it is!'; 'It's about how the system spontaneously puts up obstacles and threatens wellbeing...'* *'Up to this point we haven't received a single penny.'* And ultimately, on 9 July: *'We are putting a freeze on the project...'*
- As Vilma reflected later in the community focus group, she felt 'enslaved' by institutional systems, and was still receiving neither salary nor expenses: *'This first part, yes it was definitely enslavement... at the beginning yes, May, June, I felt like a slave.'* *'I only first received 4,000,000 pesos in July, to pay for all the expenses and transport etc. that we owed, and no salary until August. So imagine! Almost a whole year, and nothing coming in!'* (*i.e. the project was approved in September)

4. Threats to practices of equality and cultural sensitivity

The working culture of the network was considered largely equal and sensitive in practice by most of the indigenous partners, but certain core structural aspects caused unease or frustration:

- The UKRI GCRF funding call stipulated that 50% of the overall budget be allocated to the UK. This division of project funds between partners, and across the three countries, was considered inequitable: *'It's not equitable!'* (Vilma)
- Some felt budget decisions taking place amongst the UK partners was an unequal practice. Conversely if decisions were to have been made collectively, without lengthy work on all grasping the complex budgeting parameters within each institution, this too could have threatened the network equilibrium. Project time was too short to address these aspects.
- The language used by UKRI for people's roles, and the nature of the roles themselves, is not equal: if this a project to create a research network that seeks to place indigenous knowledges as central, it is unhelpful that academics are seen as 'investigators' (a high-

status role category), and the indigenous team members simply as 'project partners', 'collaborators' and 'co-ordinators': *'It would be more equitable if we created an equal team', 'like we do here at Pueblos en Camino.'* (Vilma and Rubén)

- It is the structural culture of the funding ecosystem that is being criticised here; the norms, terms and hierarchies that run through UKRI and the University sectors both in the UK and overseas. This institutional failure of sensitivity is destructive to principles of equality and to trust: *'Who, in reality, is doing the investigatory work here? It's the people in their indigenous territories, walking the path, suffering threats, taking risks... it's not the academics sitting in the universities, writing and theorising. It's us.'* (Vilma)
- In an academically funded project, academic culture can easily dominate, despite the network's efforts to confront this. While academic culture has been largely marginal in the network, in the network event held in Rio academic culture asserted itself. Indigenous perspectives on the event were heated, with significant frustration voiced about academic cultural and linguistic dominance, how spaces and timings were controlled, and about the languages and knowledge systems that were used. Academic culture is power-based, and actively excludes non-academic participants with other cultural dynamics. It was almost impossible for indigenous non-academics to participate when the conceptual languages took over, despite interpreters working to translate spoken language between Spanish and Portuguese. *'This academic conceptual discussion excludes the very people who are practically involved in living it, walking the path!'* (Vilma)
- The accounting systems were clearly culturally insensitive, as noted above. For indigenous commentators: *'It's about respecting the autonomy of the community, its own dynamic, rather than imposing...The community has a strong dynamic. I think this project has partly been about understanding how we need to assert this dynamic'* (Cony, Nasa)
- Considering linguistic sensitivity, whilst the main network languages were Spanish and Portuguese, indigenous colleagues noted that the bureaucratic lead language was English, which jarred when this arose.

5. Bridge role individuals under pressure

- Some academics have acted as bridges to resolve the intractable administrative issues, but have only achieved this by breaking institutional rules and protocols themselves.
- They have spent large amounts of their own money on behalf of the project, to facilitate activities in the ways that indigenous partners advised they could safely take place. But this was only possible because they had enough financial flexibility personally, and because they could claim back most (though not all) of this expenditure through their institutions later. This is a very uncomfortable basis for equality-based working practices.
- Approaching the blockages in the project in this way helped academics restore broken trust between indigenous and academic partners.

- However, this way of intervening also created problems for the ethical balance of the project network. Use of the resources of privilege (own money, voice within the system) to rescue the project, echoed and reinforced unwanted and polluting power structures between network members.
- These actions carried further risks: to the academics' own health and wellbeing through immense overworking and emotional stress; and to their reputations and working relationships within their institutions.

At the point of crisis on 9th July 2018 when the Colombian project co-ordinator, in consultation with the other members of PEC and members of the community, decided to pull out of the project, academic partners adopted crisis measures to ease the pressure on her, and to rescue the project. The injustice of Vilma's situation was raised at the highest levels within their institutions, to authorise direct emergency payment. A parallel strategy involved keeping some flouting of the institutional regulations below the radar, to enable ethical personal practices to supersede unethical institutional inflexibility. These ethically driven responses helped to rebuild broken trust between indigenous and academic partners, and members believe the network started to become a real team at this point.

OPPORTUNITIES

In this section key messages are presented on what indigenous partners felt were successful partnership practices that should be replicated (or that might be developed further in the future), and on what key elements they are based.

1. Affective links, time, resilience, claiming visibility

- **Personal relationships** with committed individuals (e.g. academics) who share similar values and project vision are the central determinant of success in these partnerships. Indigenous partners evaluated 'a rich and equal partnership' with the host UK University and with other partners in this network as almost entirely dependent on the affective links with individuals, and this was the most important wider theme in our case study.

'The key here is the strong relationships, the trust with key people. This is what makes successful projects possible. I don't actually imagine a University! It's about the personal.'
(Potyra)

'Well there might be rules in the project, but in the heart there aren't those rules. This is, for us Nasa, how we work – so there may be rules but, when you feel it from the heart, you have the capacity to break down the barriers that there are.' (Hernán, Nasa)

'Where a personal link has been made, they have been interested, and open.... So it's not about the institution, it's about the quality of the relationships with individual people.'
(Maria, Pankararu)

Time and again, indigenous partners' reflections placed values as entirely central, stating that this work is all about relationships. So our project approach rightly set this as a

priority – values, principles, and relationships: ‘Corazón’ (heart) – and this has been the glue, which has enabled the project to survive.

- **Time is essential** – creating time within the project process for cultural approaches that need longer, and having more time within the grant process for human connections on which to base partnerships. These personal relationships are built up over time. Their value and success is jeopardised by the combination of GCRF overly tight timeframes and institutional delays impacting time available to work on the project. Maria also highlighted that taking the time for the reflective processes generally, and especially the work for the case study, increase the depth of knowledge co-creation. She said that nobody usually asks indigenous people for feedback, and this opportunity with the case study is very valuable: *‘It’s the very first time that any university has wanted to ask these questions, and hear indigenous voices / views.’ (Maria).*
- **Resilience and determination** have been powerful drivers in this project (in dealing with numerous difficulties). The project demonstrates indigenous communities’ determination to have a voice, and our example here focuses on teamwork, and determination, again based on shared values and vision, and strong human relationships based on trust: *‘Despite all these rules, and norms, and bureaucratic systems from the university, we worked to make them work for the community. The example would be, how we’ve taken a small amount of money, but created the maximum impact for the community ... how we’ve managed to negotiate with the institutionalisation of everything, in order to work in our own way, despite the unfriendly structures.’ (Vilma/Cony)*
- **Visibility** – the key significant achievement of the project experience from an indigenous perspective is visibility: i) presence in academic spaces; and ii) as a crucial, life-saving survival strategy.
‘It is EXTREMELY important for indigenous peoples to occupy those spaces, to be present in university spaces, to bring our ways, and our focus on Mother Earth into those institutional spaces.’ ‘Even if [some events in universities] haven’t been ideal, it was important and good for the academics there to witness our rituals and customs. And it was important to have those conversations with them. It’s important that we created the space for respect for these forms of meeting and of understanding things.’ (Maria)
‘In our INvisibility we are more at risk from criminal gangs and agencies who want our land. So with a project, the task is to sow, to cultivate buenos vivires, forms, practices of resistance, and sharing those, and this is what we have been doing’ (Vilma)

2. Knowledge mobilisation

Though too early to determine clear outcomes in this area, the foundations are clear. The project provides a positive example in which local indigenous communities own the agenda of the network, because it fits with their current concerns. Indigenous partners express their motivation to enter into meta-networks, and to feed into and draw from survival discourses amongst other

indigenous groups internationally. *'It's not really possible to talk about 'bem viver' when other 'povos' (peoples) are threatened - this ignores the fundamental indigenous fabric of connections across nations and contexts.'* (Bárbara, Pankararu).

Numerous activities have invited other community representatives from indigenous networks locally, regionally, nationally and internationally (Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador, Chile, India, Europe) to build the project's knowledge sharing networks. Furthermore, 2 members from Brazil also travelled to an event focusing on poverty in Guatemala and ensured that the topic of the network was put on the agenda there too. Indigenous partners are thus moving forward with the network's agenda beyond the network itself, and feeding additional perspectives in to the network's thinking, so that the circle of knowledge development is broadened and amplified.

3. Key question: Would you do it again?

In response to this leading question, we received the following answers:

- *(Loads of laughter from Vilma, Rubén, Cony, others round the table) 'Well if it was like the first few months, we'd run a mile! But if we could do it the way that Pueblos en Camino has managed to set things up now, well yes definitely we'd participate in another project'*
- *'If it's about sowing that seed, and if that seed allows us to strengthen further this fabric of the 'plan de vida' (approach to life) of the Nasa people, the project would be welcome. But the project mustn't have too many conditions attached to it; if it doesn't, then great.'* (Flora, Ancestral Authority of Pioya, Nasa, and Hernán)
- *'Yes! Definitely. We would do another, with the right people. It's worked well, it's been a good process, positive, learning, enriching' (Maria); 'Yes. We had spent ages thinking 'never again with a university', after the difficult project with the local university here, but now... yes.'* (Potyra)

CONCLUSIONS: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Based on the full and nuanced commentaries from our network's indigenous members, represented above in summary, the following strong recommendations are made for ethical ways of initiating and supporting future research partnerships between indigenous communities and academic communities through the UKRI, for example in GCRF grant processes.

1. Substantially revise key political and technical aspects of GCRF and UKRI grant design and management stipulations

- a) Ensure partnership agreement processes take critical account of colonial resonances and work to transform them: for example, linguistic dominance; onerous expectations to submit to UK systems; unnecessary agreements for voluntary contributions, etc.
- b) The '50% of funding to be spent in the UK' stipulation should be challenged in this work.
- c) Ensure small NGOs overseas are funded at 100% FEC, equal to universities.
- d) Allow small independent organisations to become partners directly with a UK host university, again funded at 100% FEC.

- e) The language used in all funding documents - proposal forms and contracts etc. - needs to change so that all team members are referred to as investigators, or all as collaborators.
- f) Due Diligence should be reformed so the process is not colonialist in precept and style.
- g) Ensure that any local team member contracts are prioritised in the early set-up phase, which is easier if such contracts can be held directly with the UK host university.
- h) To avoid multiplying workloads and creating absurd incompatibilities, ensure that 'nested' partners are not subject to both sets of financial protocols – ideally only those of local host university, without interference from the UK host university finance departments.
- i) Advance budget releases must become the norm on research projects with organisations in ODA countries, to avoid disadvantaging communities by requiring upfront investment.
- j) Remove restrictions on sanctioned 'service providers' in this work, and allow for local autonomous indigenous providers for project support, with fair payment.
- k) Locally meaningful accounting systems must be allowed.
- l) Security considerations must not be minimised in this work. Take into account where security considerations may be guiding decisions, and flex the rules if there is a clash.
- m) Structural and institutional solutions must be sought to avoid academic project members feeling compelled to take on the burden of structural/systemic project damage themselves, and consequently having to leaving to one side their research commitment to the project.

2. Acknowledge and privilege the centrality of individual affective relationships

The strongest aspect of this network has been its capacity to work with personal connections – to build them initially, and to rebuild them following breakdowns. For members, the true currency of the network has been its emotional/affective links, empathy, solidarity, openness and shared humanity. Therefore these grant schemes/calls are by design and by budget too limited:

- a) Affective relationships emerge through points of face-to-face and social contact.
- b) Opportunities for informal social interaction are key to this, and networking events need to focus more on this, and less exclusively on academic (or any other formalised) content.
- c) Partnerships should not be driven to move quickly towards products/outputs. Processes are key.

3. Acknowledge and privilege the importance of the time required to foster collaboration

- a) Time should be allowed in projects to conduct processes ethically – e.g. relating to transparency, and for cultural approaches that need longer.
- b) Time should be taken to discuss and agree concrete criteria and specific conditions under which communities agree to take part in a project.
- c) Time should be taken for reflective processes, as they increase the depth of both communication, and knowledge co-creation.
- d) In specific practical terms, a lead-in time of 6 months should be required before projects are allowed to start in order to complete internal/institutional processes which have nothing to do with the indigenous community partners themselves. Without this, the

impact on community partners can be severe, with their lives and routines held in suspense or significantly disrupted, and people's livelihoods damaged.

4. Recognise the diversity of languages and cultures of collaboration, and the impact of linguistic and cultural exclusion

- a) Research agendas need to be co-developed together with indigenous communities – and the UKRI must explicitly allow them to be more fluid, less previously 'declared'.
- b) There should be less emphasis on clear and defined research objectives. Instead, the methods for generating a shared research agenda are a more useful aspect by which to assess the value of proposals in this field.
- c) The processes used in networking events and in research activity must be co-designed with indigenous partners. Indigenous people's culture, knowledge, and intellectual and political contributions must be given space in academic settings.
- d) The different linguistic registers used across the network should be explicitly recognised, and non-academic discourse prioritised, both within and beyond university spaces.
- e) Effort must be made to find shared languages where possible, but also to respect, give space for, and support participation through languages other than English via interpreting and other mechanisms. This includes major languages of colonisation such as Spanish and Portuguese, as well as indigenous languages.

The real life implications of flawed structures

The complex multi-level stagnation in our project over the first seven months of our case resulted in significant negative relational fallout creating broken trust, frustration, and a reality of community members' time and other commitments being severely disrespected. This entire single example of structural inadequacy in this work, which became resolved using emergency crisis calls to authorise the breaking of institutional protocols, indicates the extent to which institutional bureaucracies, the illogical manifestations of these in practice, and the ensuing time wasting together have enormous significance, specifically acute and dangerous in indigenous community contexts. Beyond the obvious practical learning, there are other layers of significance. Essentially, one point of ethical learning to disseminate from our case study lies in how unreasonable it is to expect indigenous communities, who are under survival threat on a daily basis right across the globe, to respond to vicissitudes in timings that ensue from institutional problems and delays. We need to be aware of the sacrifices in time and focus that people are already making in order to contribute to a research project with outsider (non-indigenous) partners. This is by definition risky, for populations under constant security threat from parties wishing to evict or annihilate them, as well as battling with other structurally-driven survival challenges including poverty, hunger, racism, precarity of income and lack of basic facilities.