

TSRC Advisory Board 28.09.09

Issues raised in group discussion about **Real Times**

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Matthew Scott – Community Sector Coalition

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- The importance of relatively open-ended research questions, and particularly starting from the experience and viewpoint of the case study groups - part of an interest in the power of stories and words. Reflect on why groups should be bothered by involvement in a research process
- The importance of using the research to dig deep to find in-depth stories of the issues, barriers and solutions that groups face: what helps and what gets in the way, based on an understanding of the power relations groups are implicated in. A concern is around surviving and thriving organisations – many are fighting against the odds in relation to the partnerships and the bureaucratic processes they're involved in.
- The research process itself is very important: i.e. the extent to which the research can go beyond interviews with key respondents, but can also observe activities and meetings, and to examine the dynamics of the different roles, perspectives and interests within organisations – staff, trustees, users, volunteers etc. Often research has looked at the organisation overall, or at certain individuals within it.
- Would the research take an 'action research' approach – what would the case studies get out of it themselves? Would they be able to set some of the questions? Similarly, the range of (external) people we will be speaking with could provide useful perspectives on an organisation.
- The extent and manner in which organisations respond to changing policy agendas, and whether they are in a position to shape policy (for example, the cohesion and single equalities agendas and the BME sector); or are they always in survival mode. Does the changing policy environment cause organisations to re-evaluate what they do?
- In the light of recession, the resilience of organisations will become important (likely to affect organisations in different ways). In terms of economic and social impact, this may involve asking what would happen if they weren't there.
- The research could explore organisations' experience of capacity building programmes , and of taking loans and income diversification approaches - do these leave organisations in a stronger or more fragile position.
- In addition, the group discussed: sourcing and selecting cases; the importance of selection criteria (not just size); different forms of 'hybridity' (based on the work of David Billis) and sourcing potential case studies of BME groups.