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Building Change Together: Co-Production in the Social Enterprise Ecosystem

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1. *Introduction and Scope*

This paper focuses on the process of co-production as both a practice and a social justice approach to policymaking within the context of community-led organisational transformation. It discusses how community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods challenge traditional top-down discourses by recognising the legitimacy of lived experiences and community and stakeholder expertise alongside professional expertise. This approach is particularly relevant when working with Black and racially minoritised community groups, whose knowledge and experiences have been historically excluded from dominant knowledge production systems[1].

[1] Ghorashi, *Decolonizing the integration discourse through embedded narratives*, in *ERS*, 2024, 48, 11, pp. 2174-2193; Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Oxford University Press, 2007; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Unwin Hyman, 1990.

From this perspective, co-creating policies within inclusive and democratic knowledge ecosystems[2] represents both a methodological approach and an ethical principle for challenging deep-rooted hierarchies of knowledge.

This paper is based on a case study research project conducted in 2023-2025 which observed the transformation of a branch of a Black and racially minoritised community group from a community-based organisation into a social enterprise. This transformation affected only one branch of the community group's wider operations. The research had two main objectives: first, to understand the organisational change process that took place during this transformation; and second, to examine how this transformation shaped the form and function of the newly created Black and racially minoritised-led social enterprise.

Research findings were then used to inform a further CBPR process focused on the co-production of the *Empowering Inclusion* toolkit. This toolkit was designed to serve both as a conceptual framework for understanding the transformation experience and as a practical guide of good practice for other Black and racially minoritised-led organisations seeking to undergo similar transformations. By examining the participatory co-production of the toolkit, the study contributes to debates on epistemic justice, community-led social enterprise development and participatory policymaking.

The main research question guiding this second phase of the CBPR was: How can co-production processes support the development of inclusive knowledge ecosystems that support equitable organisational transformation in community settings?

Co-production was considered as an opportunity for democratic dialogue, where communities had the opportunity to actively participate in shaping the knowledge, tools, and structures that influence their futures. The paper, therefore, explains how co-production processes can support the development of inclusive knowledge ecosystems that support equitable organisational transformation in community settings. As Jaffe argues, "social inequities are made possible by and compounded by knowledge inequity"[3]. The case study participatory research involved two levels of co-production: first, an indirect form through internal organisational consultations related

[2] Kara, *Identity and power in co-produced activist research*, in *QualRes*, 2017, 17, 3, pp. 289-301.

[3] Jaffe, *Knowledge equity is social justice: Engaging a practice theory perspective of knowledge for rural transformation*, in *RuS*, 2017, 82, 3, pp. 408-409.

to the group's transition into a social enterprise; and second, a direct engagement involving community leaders and stakeholders in the co-creation and presentation of a practical toolkit. Although the internal transformation offers important context, direct engagement with community leaders and stakeholders formed the core activity for understanding how participatory processes enable more inclusive and equitable forms of organisational change led by those most affected[4].

Therefore, by examining the co-production of the practical toolkit with community leaders and stakeholders, the paper reflects on how participatory processes can enable collective agency and sustainable, equitable forms of organisational change and contribute to discussions of equality and inclusivity in policymaking.

2. *Literature Review: Social Enterprises as Vehicles for Social Change*

Social enterprises constitute what Sepulveda describes as a "new phenomenon" and a "hidden revolution" within the UK economy[5]. Closely connected to local communities, they are often positioned as innovative institutional forms able to respond to social exclusion, economic marginalisation and community disempowerment[6]. By combining market-based activity with social objectives, social enterprises are understood to represent an alternative organisational model which seeks to reconcile economic sustainability with social justice aims[7]. In this sense, they can be understood as spaces in which economic activity is aligned with social purpose.

According to Social Enterprise UK (SEUK), there are approximately 100,000 social enterprises employing around two million people and con-

[4] Wilson, *Community-based participatory action research*, in Liamputtong (ed.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*, Springer, 2019, pp. 285-298.

[5] Sepulveda, *Social Enterprise - A New Phenomenon in the Field of Economic and Social Welfare?*, in *SPA*, 2015, 49, 7, pp. 842-861.

[6] Park, Bae, *Legitimation patterns of social enterprises as hybrid organizations*, in *AMP*, 2020, 12025; Seelos, Mair, Battilana, Dacin, *The embeddedness of social entrepreneurship: understanding variation across local communities*, in Marquis, Lounsbury, Greenwood (eds.), *Communities and Organizations*, Emerald Group, 2011, pp. 333-363.

[7] Defourny, Nyssens, *Fundamentals for an International Typology of Social Enterprise Models*, in *Voluntas*, 2017, 28, 6, pp. 2469-2497.

tributing £60 billion to the UK's GDP[8]. SEUK further highlights that social enterprises are typically "more diverse" and "more representative" than traditional SMEs. Recent data indicate that 40% of social enterprises are led by women, while 13% are led by individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, and 35% have BAME directors. Notably, 42% of BAME-led social enterprises are under three years old, reflecting the growth and dynamism of this part of the sector[9]. Such figures contribute to the perception of social enterprises as inclusive and democratising organisational forms.

However, although the representation of social enterprises in the UK economy and society is significant, it does not in itself resolve the existing societal systemic inequalities. Social enterprises operate within wider institutional environments shaped by funding regimes, regulatory frameworks and market pressures and these conditions influence how organisations define successful outputs, demonstrate impact and secure sustainability. As Vickers *et al.* suggest, social enterprises, as hybrid organisations, operate at the intersection of state/public logic, market logic, and civil society logic and have consequently to navigate the tensions between financial sustainability, public sector accountability and community-oriented social value[10].

These normative frameworks may not always align. The expectation to generate income and produce measurable outcomes could institutionalise performance-driven bureaucratic practices that challenge community-based values and relational forms of working.

The contribution of social enterprises to post-pandemic recovery has also been emphasised by Lord Victor Adebowale[11], who argued that meaningful recovery must address structural inequalities and protect opportunities for Black and racially minoritised communities. The concentration of social enterprises in deprived areas and the comparatively higher proportion of Black and minoritised ethnic leadership positions within the sector

[8] Social Enterprise UK, *The Hidden Revolution*, Social Enterprise UK, 2018.

[9] Social Enterprise UK, *Capitalism in Crisis? Transforming our Economy for People and Planet. State of Social Enterprise Survey 2019*, Social Enterprise UK, 2019.

[10] Vickers, Lyon, Sepulveda, McMullin, *Public service innovation and multiple institutional logics: The case of hybrid social enterprise providers of health and wellbeing*, in *ResPol*, 2017, 46, 10, pp. 1755-1768.

[11] Adebowale, *Our economic response to Covid-19 risks further entrenching inequality*, in *HuffPost UK*, 4 June 2020 (accessed 25 September 2026).

highlight its potential role in addressing labour market disparities[12]. At the same time, organisations operating in economically marginalised contexts often face financial precarity and short-term funding periods. In such circumstances, the motivation to pursue long-term structural change may be overshadowed by immediate survival concerns.

The meaning of social enterprise has itself been debated. Teasdale conceptualises the term as a fluid and contested construct, shaped by competing discourses that have evolved alongside shifting policy agendas[13]. Rather than denoting a fixed organisational form, the social enterprise model has been strategically mobilised by different actors seeking institutional recognition within changing political contexts. This highlights that social enterprises are not only economic entities but are situated within wider political and symbolic contexts in which legitimacy is continually being negotiated. Drawing on Meghji's analysis of racialised inequalities in access to capital and institutional recognition[14], it becomes clear that entrepreneurial initiatives are not often being recognised or supported on an equal footing. In this respect, Black and racially minoritised-led social enterprises may constitute important spaces of agency and activism, while simultaneously navigating through structural barriers embedded within the wider structures in society.

The participatory and community-centred ethos often associated with social enterprises is strongly linked – even embedded – with the principles of CBPR, which emphasises the value of collaboration, co-design, co-learning, and a shared process in decision making between researchers and communities[15]. Both approaches challenge top-down models of social change by increasing the visibility of local knowledge, lived experience, empowerment, and mutual accountability. CBPR provides a useful framework for understanding how social enterprises generate social innovation and collective capacity for addressing inequality[16]. It is equally important to note that such participation does not automatically eliminate hierarchies. The

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] Teasdale, *What's in a name? Making sense of social enterprise discourses*, in *PPA*, 2012, 27, 2, pp. 99-119.

[14] Meghji, *Black Middle-Class Britannia: Identities, Repertoires, Cultural Consumption*, Manchester University Press, 2019.

[15] Wallerstein, Duran, Oetzel, Minkler (eds.), *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health: Advancing Social and Health Equity*, 3rd ed., Jossey-Bass, 2017.

[16] Wilson, *cit*.

conditions under which knowledge is recognised, legitimised and translated into organisational strategy are still shaped by institutional norms.

Unlike other for-profit organisations, social enterprises promote a different economic model – one that combines market-based features with social justice goals[17] – with the central objective of promoting inclusive employment and empowering marginalised groups[18]. In this research, we adopt SEUK's definition of social enterprises as "businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community"[19]. This definition reflects the aspirations of new and emerging community social enterprises to scale up the trading dimensions of their social missions as a pathway to long-term sustainability[20] and positions them as emerging actors within a dynamic and evolving social solidarity economy[21].

Therefore, although social enterprises are generally regarded as vehicles for social change, their transformative potential requires further investigation as they operate within systems that distribute economic, cultural and symbolic resources unevenly. Understanding their role in addressing inequality requires not only examining representation and purpose but also understanding the institutional and epistemic conditions under which organisational transformation occurs.

Existing research on CBPR and co-production has highlighted the importance of community participation, lived experience and local knowledge in the production of knowledge[22]. At the same time, participation does not always address how different forms of knowledge are recognised and valued within existing hierarchies. As discussed earlier, community knowledge continues to operate within institutional environments that can determine whose knowledge becomes visible, whose experience is considered credible and what forms of expertise are given legitimacy[23]. These questions have received less attention in relation to community-based organisations

[17] Defourny, Nyssens, *cit*.

[18] Teasdale, *cit*.

[19] Social Enterprise UK, *Capitalism in Crisis*, cit.

[20] Vickers, Lyon, Sepulveda, McMullin, *cit*.

[21] Ridley-Duff, Bull, *Understanding Social Enterprise: Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed., Sage, 2019.

[22] Huffman, *Participatory/Action Research/CBPR*, in Matthes, Davis, Potter (eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.

[23] Aa.Vv., *The politics of co-production: Participation, power, and transformation*, in *COES*, 2020, 42, pp. 15-21.

moving towards social enterprise models[24]. Organisational transformation includes changes in the operations and structures but also access to resources and networks with external institutions. It can also affect how community knowledge and lived experience are considered during the process of transition. For Black and racially minoritised-led organisations, this is especially important because organisational change takes place within a context of existing inequalities and barriers to accessing resources, opportunities and institutional recognition. The findings contribute to existing discussions on Black and racially minoritised community-led social enterprise development by highlighting how organisational transition is shaped by questions of community knowledge, power and recognition.

3. *Theoretical Considerations*

The concept of epistemic injustice – or epistemic justice – is central to this research. Scholars have increasingly recognised that enduring social and racial hierarchies influence which voices are heard and which insights are overlooked throughout processes of knowledge production, interpretation and validation. Miranda Fricker's seminal work[25] shows that when knowledge is shaped by existing social inequalities, it gives rise to a distinct form of injustice – epistemic injustice – which undermines both individual credibility and collective understanding. In other words, epistemic injustice provides a way of understanding how inequalities operate within processes of knowledge production, shaping which experiences and perspectives gain legitimacy and which are marginalised or disregarded. Fricker distinguishes between two forms of epistemic injustice. Testimonial injustice occurs when certain groups are treated as less credible knowers, so that their accounts and contributions are given reduced weight or dismissed altogether. This can lead to the dismissal of certain lived experiences within academic and, ultimately, policy discourses[26]. Hermeneutical injustice arises from

[24] Spanuth, Urbano, *Exploring social enterprise legitimacy within ecosystems from an institutional approach: A systematic literature review and research agenda*, in *IJMR*, 2024, 26, pp. 211-231; Munoz, Steiner, Farmer, *Processes of community-led social enterprise development: Learning from the rural context*, in *CDJ*, 2015, 50, 3, pp. 478-493.

[25] Fricker, *cit.*

[26] *Ibid.*

systemic and structural barriers[27] that prevent the voices of marginalised groups from being adequately captured in research, often due to a lack of relevant theoretical frameworks or discourses capable of reflecting their experiences and social realities[28].

Epistemic injustices are damaging to both individuals and the wider community on several grounds, as they undermine the credibility of marginalised actors as knowers and reproduce broader patterns of social inequality within knowledge production systems. In this sense, epistemic injustice constitutes a form of social injustice because individuals or groups are undermined specifically in their capacity as knowers due to existing power relations and prejudicial assumptions[29]. Addressing such injustices therefore requires not only greater awareness of bias but also institutional practices that support more inclusive and participatory processes of knowledge production[30].

These ideas resonate with Pierre Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital, which builds upon other forms of capital, such as social and cultural capital. Symbolic capital refers to the recognition, status, legitimacy and "social importance" that individuals or organisations accumulate within a given social field[31]. Those who possess such resources are therefore more likely to have their knowledge recognised and legitimised, while those who do not tend to remain undervalued or marginalised within institutional settings. Individuals with recognised credentials, established professional networks, and familiarity with dominant linguistic and cultural repertoires are more readily perceived as credible actors. In organisational contexts, this influences whose interpretations shape strategic decisions, whose proposals attract funding, and whose expertise becomes accepted as legitimate practice. Symbolic capital thus operates not only through formal hierarchies and

[27] Anderson, *Epistemic justice as a virtue of social institutions*, in *SocEp*, 2012, 26, 2, pp. 163-173.

[28] Anderson, *cit.*; Dotson, *A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression*, in *Frontiers*, 2012, 33, 1, pp. 24-47.

[29] Cappellini, Hutton, *The Politics of Epistemic Marginality: Testimonies in Opposition*, in Maclaran, Stevens, Kravets (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Marketing and Feminism*, Routledge, 2022; Aa.Vv., *Omission and Commission as Marketplace Trauma*, in *JPPM*, 2016, 35, 2, pp. 280-291; Fricker, *cit.*

[30] Dotson, *Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression*, in *SocEp*, 2014, 28, 2, pp. 115-138; Anderson, *cit.*

[31] Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, Stanford University Press, 2000, p. 241.

authority structures but also through the everyday distribution of credibility and recognition within organisational interactions[32].

This concept has been interpreted in different ways, including in Bourdieu's own work[33]. In some interpretations, symbolic capital is closely associated with other forms of capital such as economic, social and cultural, in the sense that recognition and prestige tend to derive from the possession of these resources. In other discussions, the concept is treated more independently, suggesting that symbolic capital may also emerge through processes of recognition that grant legitimacy and authority within a particular field[34].

This paper draws on this latter interpretation and conceptualises symbolic capital as a form of recognition that grants credibility and authority to particular actors, narratives and forms of knowledge within a field. From this perspective, symbolic capital provides a useful lens for examining how certain narratives, practices and forms of knowledge become recognised and legitimised within social enterprise research. The themes explored in this paper were identified through a co-design and co-creation process undertaken as part of the research, which helped surface the issues and perspectives considered most salient by participants.

Responding to epistemic injustice therefore involves creating spaces where different and alternative voices are not only included but also recognised as legitimate contributors to knowledge production[35]. Within the wider context of equality, diversity and inclusion, epistemic justice reminds us that achieving these goals is not only about who participates but also about the conditions that enable equal participation. This includes establishing structures and processes that actively support participation, reduce barriers to engagement, and create environments in which different forms of knowledge can be expressed, heard and taken seriously[36].

CBPR should therefore be designed around the principle that community members and stakeholders act as active partners rather than passive

[32] Bourdieu, *Social Space and Symbolic Power*, in *ST*, 1989, 7, 1, pp. 14-25.

[33] Driessens, *Celebrity capital: Redefining celebrity using field theory*, in *TaS*, 2013, 42, 5, pp. 543-560.

[34] *Ibid*.

[35] Fricker, *cit*.

[36] Chouinard, Milley, *Uncovering the mysteries of inclusion: Empirical and methodological possibilities in participatory evaluation in an international context*, in *EPP*, 2018, 67, pp. 70-78.

subjects[37]. Through collaboration, participation, and reflection, CBPR enables democratic knowledge production processes that are more responsive to local needs and that strengthen sustainable systems of knowledge[38]. Extending this argument further, epistemic justice can be viewed as one of the core principles underpinning inclusive ecosystems – embodying the cultural and ethical values that guide social enterprises. Realising this in practice requires challenging the established hierarchies of what Bourdieu called capitals[39] – the very mechanisms that offer opportunities to some while systematically excluding others.

Based on these theoretical concepts, the following diagram has been developed as an interpretive framework for this research.

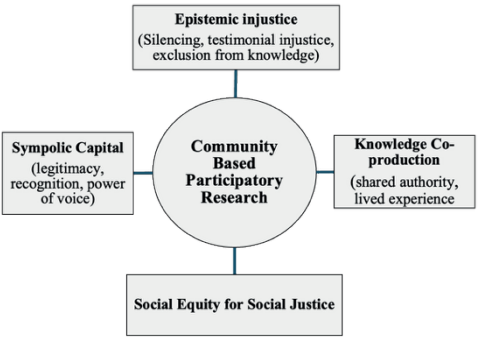


Figure 1. *Community-based Participatory Research for Social Equity: a theoretical framework*

As shown in Figure 1, the framework positions CBPR as the central methodological approach through which knowledge is co-designed and

[37] Wallerstein, Muhammad, Sanchez-Youngman, *Power Dynamics in Community-Based Participatory Research: A Multiple-Case Study Analysis of Partnering Contexts, Histories, and Practices*, in *HEB*, 2019, 46, 1 suppl., pp. 19S-32S.

[38] Burkhart, Schneider, *Whose knowledge counts for transformative change? - Operationalizing epistemic justice for transdisciplinary knowledge co-production*, in *ESP*, 2026, 176, 104322.

[39] Bourdieu, *The forms of capital*, in Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Greenwood Press, 1986, pp. 241-258.

co-produced between researchers and community actors. Two analytical dimensions inform this process. First, the concept of epistemic injustice highlights the structural and systemic exclusion of marginalised groups from knowledge production and recognition. Second, symbolic capital refers to how legitimacy, authority, and recognition influence whose knowledge is considered credible and valued within research and policy discourses. When considered together, the concepts of epistemic injustice and symbolic capital provide complementary perspectives for understanding how knowledge hierarchies emerge and persist within research and organisational contexts. By placing CBPR at the intersection of these dynamics, the framework shows how participatory approaches can help redistribute symbolic capital and address epistemic injustice in the production of knowledge[40].

The framework is dynamic, recognising that the relationships between CBPR, epistemic injustice, and symbolic capital evolve over time. Through participatory engagement, these interactions may challenge existing knowledge hierarchies and reshape whose knowledge is heard, recognised, and valued within research and policy making contexts[41]. In doing so, the framework highlights how participatory knowledge production can contribute to the ongoing re-conceptualisation of social equity and its relationship to questions of social justice.

In this research, co-production provides a way of examining how epistemic justice and symbolic capital operate within participatory processes. Epistemic justice draws attention to whose knowledge is recognised and included and symbolic capital helps to explain how particular forms of knowledge gain recognition and legitimacy within organisational and institutional settings. Co-production connects these processes by creating opportunities for community knowledge and lived experience to contribute to the interpretation of organisational change and to the development of shared understandings.

[40] Glass, Newman, *Ethical and epistemic dilemmas in knowledge production: Addressing their intersection in collaborative, community-based research*, in *TRE*, 2015, 13, 1, pp. 23-37.

[41] Janes, *Democratic encounters? Epistemic privilege, power, and community-based participatory action research*, in *ActRes*, 2016, 14, 1, pp. 72-87.

4. *Methodology*

Building on this framework, the study adopted a CBPR design to examine how epistemic justice and symbolic capital unfold within the organisational transition of a community-led initiative. Community members were engaged as research partners throughout the design, interpretation and refinement of the study, rather than being treated simply as research participants. This section therefore outlines the participatory research design and the collaborative processes through which data collection, analysis and interpretation were undertaken in dialogue with community stakeholders, highlighting how participatory consultation and co-creation shaped both the analytical themes and the final research outputs[42].

The study adopted a qualitative case study design to examine the transition of a section of a community group's activities into a social enterprise model. In particular, the research focused on how an initiative led by Black and racially minoritised communities evolved from a community-based activity into a more structured social enterprise, and how this development influenced organisational practices, community legitimacy and approaches to sustainability.

The study draws on a case study of Community Inclusion Initiative (CII) (pseudonym), a grassroots organisation working with diverse migrant, refugee and multi-ethnic communities in Oxford, UK. As well as examining the organisation as a whole, the research focuses on the development of one of its initiatives that began as a community-led activity and gradually evolved into a social enterprise. This transition was based on the organisation's soup kitchen initiative, through which revenues generated by the newly created social enterprise activities are reinvested into the service itself, strengthening its financial sustainability and supporting its long-term continuity and commitment to the community. The case study approach enabled an in-depth examination of organisational change processes within a specific community context, allowing the research to capture both institutional dynamics and the lived experiences of those involved in the initiative[43].

[42] Minkler, Baden, *Impacts of CBPR on academic researchers, research quality and methodology, and power relations*, in Minkler, Wallerstein (eds.), *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health: From Process to Outcomes*, 2nd ed., Jossey-Bass, 2008, pp. 243-262.

[43] Annamalah, Abdullah, Anthonysamy, Ahmed, *Case study research in qualitative inquiry: a structured guide to design, data collection and analysis*, in *QRJ*, 2026, ahead-of-print.

Within the CBPR framework, the study adopted a co-creation approach to collaborative knowledge production between researchers and community actors[44]. The aim was to ensure that the research reflected principles of epistemic justice, inclusion and shared authority[45]. Community members contributed not only to the research process but also to the interpretation and refinement of the findings. This approach was particularly relevant given the study's focus on organisations led by Black and racially minoritised communities, where traditional research approaches[46] may risk overlooking community knowledge and lived experience.

Data collection consisted primarily of semi-structured interviews with participants from the case study organisation and key informants from the wider voluntary and social enterprise sector. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. For CII, participants were selected to reflect different forms of involvement in the organisation, including members of the leadership team, volunteers and beneficiaries. This was intended to capture perspectives from across different levels of the organisation. Participants from the wider Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector were selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience in the field. Attention was also given to achieving an appropriate balance in terms of gender and ethnic background across the participant sample. The one-hour interviews were conducted by the researchers between 2024 and 2025, both online and in person. They were recorded and professionally transcribed. Ethical approval was obtained from Anglia Ruskin University. All participants received information about the research and provided informed consent prior to participation. Participation was voluntary, with participants informed of their right to withdraw, and appropriate processes were followed to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

Semi-structured interviews enabled participants to reflect on their lived experiences and work practices while allowing the researchers to explore emerging themes in greater depth[47]. In total, ten interviews were conducted

[44] Carrera, Levidow, *Introduction: participatory knowledge co-production*, in *SaC*, 2025, 34, 1, pp. 1-12.

[45] Rolin, *Resisting epistemic exploitation: From institutional remedies to community-based research*, in *SHPS*, 2025, 111, pp. 63-71.

[46] Aa.Vv., *From voice to action: toward participatory action research in anti-racism education in Canada*, in *IJQSE*, 2025, pp. 1-24.

[47] Aa.Vv., *Sensitive, Challenging, and Difficult Topics: Experiences and Practical Considerations for Qualitative Researchers*, in *IJQM*, 2022, 21.

with members of the CII management team, volunteers and beneficiaries, alongside six interviews with representatives from local authorities and organisations within the VCSE sector. The interviews explored organisational development, community engagement, economic sustainability challenges and the role of social enterprises in addressing structural inequalities.

The qualitative data were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns across participants' narratives. Preliminary themes relating to organisational transition, community legitimacy and sustainability were identified through initial coding before being refined through the participatory consultation process described below.

Consistent with the CBPR approach, these preliminary themes were not treated as fixed analytical outcomes but were further developed through an iterative process of consultation and collective interpretation with research participants[48]. As illustrated in Figure 2, the preliminary findings were discussed during two collaborative webinars involving organisational members and wider community stakeholders. This participatory process ensured that the analytical themes reflected both the empirical data and participants' experiential knowledge, ultimately informing the development of the *Empowering Inclusion Toolkit*[49].

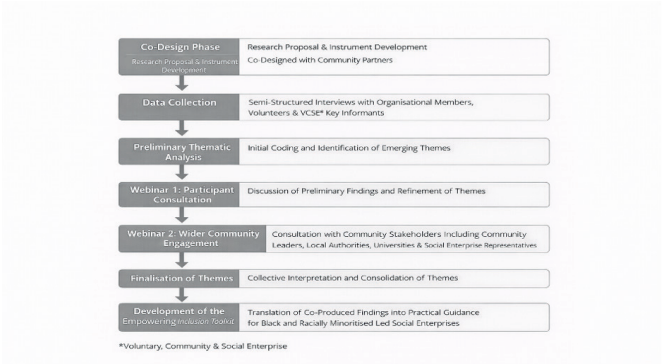


Figure 2. *Community-Based Participatory Research - Methodological Process*

[48] von Unger, *Whose interpretations matter? Participatory research approaches*, in *Handbook of Interpretive Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, Edward Elgar, 2025, ch. 22.

[49] Aa.Vv., *Empowering Inclusion: Toolkit for Black and Racially Minoritised Led Social Enterprises*, Safe and Inclusive Communities, Anglia Ruskin University, 2024.

In more detail, Figure 2 illustrates the stages of the CBPR process adopted in this study. The research began with a co-design phase during which the research proposal, methodological approach and research instruments were developed collaboratively with community partners[50]. This ensured that the research questions, interview guides and overall study design reflected both community priorities and the academic objectives of the study. The research team retained responsibility for the overall research process. Decision-making authority was shared with community partners at specific stages of the research. In particular, the interpretation and refinement of the themes involved joint decision-making, with the final themes agreed through the participatory process. Volunteers, beneficiaries and employees who participated in the research received a nominal voucher in recognition of their contribution. No significant disagreements arose during the participatory discussions; instead, participants built on each other's contributions, adding further perspectives that helped to refine the findings. The next stage involved data collection through semi-structured interviews with organisational members, volunteers, beneficiaries and key informants from the VCSE sector and local authorities.

Preliminary thematic analysis followed, during which the research team used NVivo to code the qualitative material and identify emerging patterns relating to organisational transition, community legitimacy and sustainability[51]. The initial codes were reviewed and grouped into preliminary themes. In accordance with the CBPR framework, these themes were treated as starting points for participatory interpretation rather than definitive analytical outcomes[52].

The subsequent stages involved structured consultation and co-creation with community stakeholders[53]. The first webinar brought together six members of the CII organisation and research participants to discuss and refine the preliminary findings. The second webinar extended this process to fourteen stakeholders, including community leaders, local authorities,

[50] Brown, Stalker, *Assess Connect Transform In Our Neighbourhood: A framework for engaging community partners in community-based participatory research designs*, in *ActRes*, 2021, 19, 2, pp. 372-392.

[51] Braun, Clarke, *Using thematic analysis in psychology*, in *QRP*, 2006, 3, 2, pp. 77-101.

[52] Cornwall, Jewkes, *What is participatory research?*, in *SSM*, 1995, 41, 12, pp. 1667-1676.

[53] Brandsen, Steen, Verschuere (eds.), *Co-production and Co-creation: Engaging Citizens in Public Services*, Routledge, 2018.

university representatives and actors from the social enterprise sector, allowing the themes to be further validated and consolidated through collective interpretation. Both webinars lasted over an hour each and were facilitated by the research team. The discussions were recorded and professionally transcribed for analysis. The initial analysis identified the main themes and the participatory discussions helped to confirm and shape their final form. Co-production was therefore present at different stages of the research process, from the initial co-design of the research to the collective interpretation and refinement of the findings.

Following these consultations, the themes were synthesised by integrating the primary qualitative analysis with insights generated during the participatory webinars. The final stage involved translating these co-produced findings into the *Empowering Inclusion Toolkit*[54], providing practical guidance for Black and racially minoritised-led social enterprises and community organisations aspiring to transition towards social enterprise models. The toolkit is organised around the four themes developed through the research and participatory discussions: transitioning; racial and social justice, equity, diversity and inclusion; legitimacy; and sustainability. It combines findings from the case study with practical guidance on issues including community engagement, partnerships, inclusive leadership, organisational sustainability and the development of community skills and resources. Overall, the CBPR methodology enabled the analytical framework to develop iteratively through engagement between researchers and community stakeholders, ensuring that both the thematic analysis and the practical outputs remained grounded in community knowledge and lived experience[55].

Researcher reflexivity was also considered through the participatory process. The research team undertook the initial analysis and identified the main topics emerging from the interview material. These initial interpretations were then discussed with CII members during the first webinar, providing an opportunity for the research team to consider its interpretation of the findings alongside the experiences and perspectives of those directly involved in the organisation.

[54] Aa.Vv., *Empowering Inclusion: Toolkit*, cit.

[55] Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, *A systematic review of co-creation and co-production*, in *PMR*, 2015, 17, 9, pp. 1333-1357.

5. *Findings and Discussion*

The four themes focus on different aspects of the organisational transformation, and they also help to better understand how community knowledge was recognised and interpreted through the participatory research process. The themes reflect the organisational issues that emerged during the transition and the knowledge and experiences that participants considered important. In this way, the findings connect the organisational transformation to the wider research question of how co-production can support more inclusive knowledge ecosystems within community settings.

The analytical themes discussed here emerged through the collaborative research process described in the methodology. Initial coding of the interview material generated preliminary observations relating to organisational change, community engagement and sustainability, which were subsequently refined through consultation with research participants and wider stakeholders (Figure 2). Guided by the principles of CBPR, the interpretation of the empirical material extended beyond researcher-led analysis through collective reflection with those directly involved in the organisational context[56]. As a result, the analytical framework developed through an iterative process that combined interview data with participants' organisational experience and sector knowledge[57].

Through this collaborative process, the preliminary observations were refined into four interrelated themes that participants identified as central to understanding the transition of community initiatives into social enterprise models led by Black and racially minoritised communities. These themes subsequently informed the development of the project toolkit and provide the structure for the empirical analysis presented below. Rather than being predetermined by the researchers, they reflect the issues that participants themselves identified as most significant for understanding the organisational and social dynamics of the transition process.

The four themes relate to organisational transitioning; racial justice/social justice and equity; legitimacy; and sustainability. Together they capture interconnected dimensions of organisational transformation ob-

[56] Wallerstein, Duran, Oetzel, Minkler (eds.), *cit*.

[57] Carney, Dundon, Ní Léime, *Participatory action research with and within community activist groups: Capturing the collective experience of Ireland's Community and Voluntary Pillar in social partnership*, in *ActRes*, 2012, 10, 3, pp. 313-330.

served in the case study. The first theme focuses on the organisational processes involved in transitioning from a community-based initiative to a social enterprise structure, including the motivations for change and the practical challenges encountered. The second examines the role of racial and social justice, community leadership and equity, diversity and inclusion in shaping the identity and mission of the emerging social enterprise, highlighting the importance of community knowledge and collective agency within contexts of structural inequality. The third explores legitimacy, examining how community-based organisations establish recognition and credibility both within the communities they serve and across the wider institutional environment. The fourth considers sustainability, encompassing the financial, social, environmental and organisational factors influencing the long-term viability of community-led social enterprise initiatives.

Although presented separately for analytical clarity, these themes are closely interconnected. Participants emphasised that questions of leadership, legitimacy, sustainability and organisational structure are experienced simultaneously, reflecting the complex organisational environments within which community-led initiatives operate. These themes suggest that the transition towards social enterprise models cannot alone be understood as an organisational process but must also be situated within the existing structural conditions that shape access to resources, institutional recognition and economic opportunity. In this respect, the findings contribute to wider debates on how organisational and institutional arrangements can reproduce inequalities affecting marginalised communities, particularly in relation to leadership recognition, access to funding and participation in local economic development initiatives[58].

5.1. *Transitioning*

The theme of transitioning emerged as the most immediate and commonly discussed issue during the participatory discussions. Participants frequently emphasised that the shift from a community-based initiative to a social enterprise model represented more than a simple organisational re-

[58] Aa.Vv., *Making the Invisible Visible: Identifying and Articulating Culture in Practice-Based Evidence*, in *AJCP*, 2018, 62, 1–2, pp. 121–134.

structuring. The process was understood as a gradual one, through which an informal community activity evolved into a more structured organisational form capable of generating resources to sustain its social mission. During the two webinar discussions, participants reflected on how this transition required balancing the original community values of the initiative with the practical demands associated with operating within a more formal organisational and economic environment.

5.1. 1. *The Transition as a Response to Structural Constraints*

A key issue raised during the interviews and the consultations that followed concerned the financial sustainability of the organisation's activities. Participants explained that the decision to develop a social enterprise initiative emerged largely in response to the limited availability of stable public funding for community services. In particular, the organisation's food redistribution programme, which had initially operated as a volunteer-led initiative, faced increasing operational costs that could not be covered through short-term grants alone. The development of the community kitchen was therefore understood as a strategy for generating income that could sustain the organisation's wider activities.

As one participant explained:

"That is the main reason [CII] kitchen was established. Because when we do well in [CII] kitchen, then we have more finances to put on our enterprise – what we do every Wednesday. Because if the [CII] kitchen goes well… then we know we're going to do well because… finances are a big problem." (CII volunteer interview).

The quote suggests that the transition towards a social enterprise model was shaped by financial pressures affecting community organisations operating in contexts characterised by limited and often short-term funding opportunities. Participants mentioned that the transition towards social enterprise models cannot be understood only in organisational terms but must be situated within systems that shape access to resources, institutional recognition and economic opportunity. For many community organisations operating in economically marginalised contexts, the development of trading activities represents one of the few viable pathways for sustaining social programmes that would otherwise remain dependent on unstable funding arrangements.

5.1. 2. *Community Knowledge and Resources in the Transition Process*

Another important aspect of the transition discussed during the consultations concerned the role of community knowledge and resources in shaping the emerging social enterprise model. Participants described how the organisation drew upon the skills, cultural practices and professional experience present within its diverse community networks.

One example discussed during the interviews involved the creation of a community kitchen initiative, where members of the organisation's diaspora communities contributed their culinary knowledge to develop a menu reflecting different cultural traditions. These activities allowed the organisation to generate income and maintain strong connections with the communities it served.

As one of the research participants explained, the initiative also created new forms of interaction between different communities involved in the organisation's activities:

"I do believe because it started with the food bank. A lot of communities got used to each other, now the kitchens for those communities has come, each community is given the chance they will do their own food that the other communities come and eat. Which will benefit them economically… each community will gain something." (CII leadership team interview).

Further, this statement refers to how the initiative was understood not only as an income-generating activity but also as a mechanism through which different community groups could interact, exchange cultural practices and benefit economically from shared organisational initiatives.

Interviewees noted that this approach reflected an organisational approach in which community assets were treated as sources of organisational strength rather than as deficits requiring external intervention. During the participatory discussions, several contributors emphasised that the success of the initiative depended not only on financial planning but also on the ability of the organisation to recognise and mobilise the diverse forms of knowledge and expertise present within its community networks. This observation reflects a central principle of the CBPR approach, which recognises that communities hold valuable forms of context specific knowledge that are often overlooked in conventional research and organisational decision-making. By creating opportunities for interaction and collective reflection, participatory processes enable these forms of knowledge to become visible and actionable

within organisational practice[59]. In this sense, the participatory discussions did not simply validate the research findings but also revealed the importance of recognising community-based expertise as a key resource in the development and sustainability of social enterprise initiatives.

5.1. 3. *Transitioning and Institutional Recognition*

The transition towards a social enterprise structure also raised questions about how community organisations establish legitimacy within institutional environments. Participants explained that moving towards a more formal organisational model required developing new relationships with external actors, including local authorities, universities and other organisations within the voluntary and social enterprise sector. These relationships were often perceived as necessary for gaining recognition and support within policy and funding environments that tend to prioritise formally structured organisations.

One example discussed during the interviews focused on CII's relationship with the local council. Community knowledge had identified problems with the distribution of food that did not reflect the cultural and religious needs of some communities. These concerns were raised with the council and contributed to changes in its approach to food redistribution. This example showed how knowledge developed through close relationships with local communities could also inform the practices of external institutions.

At the same time, participants reflected on the importance of ensuring that these institutional relationships did not undermine the community-oriented values that had originally shaped the organisation's activities. The discussions therefore revealed an ongoing negotiation between maintaining grassroots accountability and adapting to institutional expectations associated with operating as a social enterprise.

5.1. 4. *Transition as a Collective Learning Process*

Another important aspect of the participatory discussions highlighted that the transition towards a social enterprise model should be understood

[59] *Ibid.*

as an ongoing learning process rather than a clearly defined organisational endpoint. Participants described how new organisational practices emerged gradually through experimentation, reflection and adaptation. The CBPR process itself provided an opportunity for organisational members and external stakeholders to reflect collectively on these experiences and to articulate the lessons that could inform similar initiatives in other contexts. In this sense, the transition towards a social enterprise model represented not only a structural organisational change but also a process through which community actors developed new ways of interpreting their own organisational practices and possibilities for future development.

5.2. *Racial Justice, Social Justice and Equity*

The second theme emerging from the participatory discussions is about the role of racial and social justice within the general context of equity shaping the identity and mission of the emerging social enterprise. Participants frequently emphasised that the organisation's activities were based on the lived experiences of communities that have historically faced barriers in accessing economic opportunities, organisational recognition and leadership roles within mainstream institutional settings. For some interviewees, such inequalities are not only expressed through economic disadvantage but also through everyday interactions shaped by prejudice and social hierarchies. As one interviewee observed, discriminatory attitudes can become normalised in routine encounters with institutions and service providers, where certain groups are ignored or addressed differently.

"And that shows up in the colour prejudice situation and in the ageing situation or the poverty, any of these situations, it shows up in thinking it's alright to talk to people in a certain way or ignore people in a certain way." (CII, Volunteer Interviewee).

The quote shows how experiences of marginalisation are often embedded in everyday interactions, reinforcing the importance of community-led initiatives that prioritise respectful engagement and recognition of community members. Within this context, the development of the social enterprise initiative was not understood only as an organisational strategy for financial sustainability, but also as an effort to create spaces where community knowledge, cultural practices and forms of participation could be recognised and valued.

During the interviews and subsequent consultations, participants reflected on how community-led initiatives can contribute to addressing structural inequalities affecting racially minoritised groups. Most webinar contributors highlighted that many individuals involved in the organisation had experienced limited access to employment opportunities, professional networks and institutional support. The social enterprise initiative was therefore often described as creating opportunities for participation in economic and organisational activities that may otherwise remain inaccessible. In this sense, the organisation's activities were often framed not only as service provision but also as a mechanism for advancing greater equity within local community contexts[60].

Participants also emphasised the importance of community leadership in shaping the organisation's priorities and activities. In contrast to more hierarchical organisational structures, decision-making processes within the initiative were often described as emerging through collective discussions and shared experiences among community members. These discussions highlighted the importance of the knowledge and experiences of community members, volunteers and others involved in the organisation's activities. Their knowledge helped to identify community needs and develop initiatives that responded to them.

This was reflected in the use of community representatives who maintained close relationships with different ethnic communities and helped to identify needs that may otherwise remain less visible. Participants explained that people could feel more comfortable discussing their difficulties with representatives they already knew and trusted, allowing these experiences to inform how the organisation responded to community needs.

The participatory nature of the research process reinforced this emphasis on community knowledge. The consultation discussions provided an opportunity for organisational members and wider community stakeholders to reflect on how their experiences and perspectives informed the development of the organisation's activities. Through these exchanges, participants emphasised that the recognition of community knowledge was closely connected to questions of equity, particularly in contexts where the experiences of racially minoritised groups are often overlooked or undervalued within institutional decision-making processes.

[60] Israel, Schulz, Parker, Becker, *Critical Issues in Developing and Following CBPR Principles*, in Minkler, Wallerstein (eds.), *Community-Based Participatory Research*, cit., pp. 47-62.

These reflections resonate with the theoretical concerns discussed earlier in the paper regarding epistemic justice and the recognition of marginalised forms of knowledge. The participatory discussions created a space in which community members could articulate how their experiences shaped organisational practices and priorities and contributed to the interpretation of the research findings themselves. In this respect, the CBPR process enabled forms of knowledge that are often marginalised within conventional research settings to play a more visible role in shaping both the analysis and the practical toolkit developed through the project.

5.3. *Legitimacy and Symbolic Capital*

The third theme emerging from the participatory discussions was based on questions of legitimacy and recognition within the organisational and institutional environments in which community-led social enterprises operate. Participants frequently emphasised that developing a social enterprise structure required not only organisational adaptation but also the ability to establish credibility and recognition among external actors, including local authorities, funding bodies and organisations within the voluntary and social enterprise sector. In this sense, the transition towards a social enterprise model was closely connected to the ways in which community-led initiatives are perceived and valued within wider institutional contexts.

During the interviews and consultations, several participants reflected on the challenges faced by community organisations when seeking recognition for their activities and expertise. The CII organisation had already developed strong relationships within the communities it served. However, gaining institutional recognition was often described as a more complex process. Participants noted that organisations led by racially minoritised communities sometimes encounter difficulties in having their knowledge, experiences and organisational approaches recognised as legitimate forms of expertise within formal decision-making environments.

These challenges were visible in relation to funding. One participant explained that CII was often competing for funding with organisations that had paid staff, greater capacity to prepare funding applications and established relationships with funding bodies. For CII, limited time and resources made accessing these opportunities more difficult, and gaining

the trust of funding organisations was described as a process that could take time.

These reflections highlight the relevance of symbolic capital in understanding how organisational legitimacy is constructed and recognised. As discussed in the theoretical framework, symbolic capital refers to the forms of recognition, credibility and authority that allow certain actors and forms of knowledge to be acknowledged as legitimate within a given field[61]. Within the context of community-led social enterprises, legitimacy is therefore shaped not only by organisational performance or service delivery but also by the degree to which the organisation's practices and forms of knowledge are recognised by external institutional actors.

Participants often emphasised that establishing such recognition required building relationships with organisations operating within the local institutional environment. Partnerships with local authorities, universities and other voluntary sector organisations were described as important mechanisms through which community initiatives could strengthen their visibility and credibility. At the same time, participants also noted that these relationships required careful negotiation to ensure that the organisation's community-oriented values and priorities were maintained.

As one interviewee explained, collaborative initiatives depend heavily on sustained relationship building and trust:

"It needs a lot of relationship building. It needs a lot of time; it needs a lot of trust to be built, and you can very easily lose that trust through processes like what we were describing before." (Key Informant interviewee).

This observation highlights the relational nature of legitimacy within community initiatives. Trust is not automatically gained through formal authority or institutional status but develops gradually through continued engagement and responsiveness to community needs[62].

The participatory discussions also highlighted that legitimacy operates at multiple levels[63]. On the one hand, community organisations derive legitimacy from the trust and recognition they receive within the communities they serve. This form of legitimacy is grounded in long-standing relation-

[61] Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, cit.; Bourdieu, *The forms of*, cit.

[62] Mizrachi, Drori, Anspach, *Repertoires of Trust: The Practice of Trust in a Multinational Organization amid Political Conflict*, in *ASR*, 2007, 72, 1, pp. 143-165.

[63] Haack, Schilke, Zucker, *Legitimacy Revisited: Disentangling Propriety, Validity, and Consensus*, in *JMS*, 2021, 58, pp. 749-781.

ships, shared experiences and the organisation's ability to respond to local needs. On the other hand, institutional legitimacy often depends on formal structures, governance practices and the ability to align organisational activities with policy and funding frameworks.

Through the participatory consultations conducted as part of this research, participants reflected on how these different forms of legitimacy interact in practice. The discussions highlighted that community organisations have to navigate between maintaining grassroots accountability and adapting to institutional expectations associated with operating as a social enterprise. In this respect, the transition towards a social enterprise model was understood not only as an organisational change but also as a process through which the organisation sought to strengthen its symbolic capital within the wider institutional environment[64].

The CBPR process itself contributed to making these dynamics more visible. By involving organisational members and sector stakeholders in the interpretation of the research findings, the participatory discussions created a space in which participants could reflect collectively on how legitimacy and recognition are constructed within their organisational experiences. This process allowed participants to articulate the challenges associated with gaining institutional recognition and maintaining the community-oriented principles that had originally shaped the organisation's activities.

5.4. *Sustainability*

The fourth theme emerging from the participatory discussions concerns the question of sustainability and the conditions required to maintain community-led social enterprise initiatives over time. Interviewees emphasised that sustainability should not be understood only in financial terms but rather as an organisational and social process involving the ability of community organisations to maintain their activities, relationships and mission within often challenging institutional environments.

During the interviews and the later webinar consultations, participants described the financial sustainability of community initiatives as a persistent concern. Participants noted that community organisations frequently oper-

[64] Yang, Wu, *In search of the right fusion recipe: the role of legitimacy in building a social enterprise model*, in *BEER*, 2016, 25, pp. 327-343.

ate within funding environments characterised by short-term project grants and limited long-term institutional support. In this context, the development of social enterprise activities was often perceived as a practical strategy for generating income that could support the organisation's core community services. The creation of the community kitchen initiative discussed earlier was therefore frequently framed as a mechanism through which the organisation could reduce its dependence on external funding while maintaining its social mission.

Volunteer interviews showed how this could work in practice. Income generated through the community kitchen could contribute to the food redistribution activities, including the purchase of food for distribution within the community. This created a direct connection between the social enterprise activity and the continuation of CII's existing community work.

At the same time, participants emphasised that financial sustainability alone was not sufficient to ensure the long-term viability of community-led initiatives. Several contributors highlighted the importance of maintaining strong relationships within the communities served by the organisation. Trust, shared experiences and collective participation were described as essential elements enabling the organisation to mobilise volunteers, build partnerships and sustain its activities over time. As one participant explained:

"Sustainability includes not only money but people." (Volunteer Interviewee).

This comment highlights how sustainability within community initiatives is understood as a collective process as interviewees emphasised the importance of community participation, volunteering and shared responsibility as fundamental to sustaining these activities over time. These dimensions were described by the research participants as forms of social capital that supported the organisation's ability to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

In addition to the above, the discussions also highlighted the importance of organisational learning that was gained during the transition of CII towards a social enterprise model. Participants reflected on how new practices, partnerships and operational strategies emerged gradually through experimentation and collaboration. In this respect, sustainability was described as a dynamic process rather than a fixed organisational outcome. Maintaining organisational activities required continuous adaptation to changing financial conditions, policy environments and community needs.

These reflections enriched the discussion on how sustainability within community-led social enterprises is closely connected to the structural conditions that pose a barrier to accessing resources, institutional recognition and economic opportunities. It was argued by many research participants that community organisations must navigate organisational environments in which funding systems, policy frameworks and institutional expectations can present significant challenges for smaller community-led initiatives.

The participatory research process provided an opportunity for organisational members and external stakeholders to reflect collectively on these issues and to identify strategies that could strengthen the long-term viability of community-led initiatives. In this respect, the CBPR approach contributed not only to analysing organisational experiences but also to supporting a shared understanding of the practical conditions required to sustain community-based social enterprise activities.

The four themes are helpful to better understand how the transition towards community-led social enterprise models involves navigating multiple organisational and institutional dynamics. Participants emphasised that organisational development cannot be separated from the wider structural and systemic conditions as these have an impact on how both people and organisations access resources, gain recognition and secure economic opportunity. These findings reveal how community-led initiatives respond to multiple challenges by mobilising community knowledge, collective leadership and local networks.

At the same time, the participatory research process enabled these experiences to be interpreted collaboratively, ensuring that the analytical framework developed through the study reflected the perspectives of those directly involved in the organisational transformation. In this respect, the process and findings of this research show how CBPR can contribute not only to understanding organisational change but also to recognising forms of knowledge that are often overlooked within conventional research and policy discussions.

6. *Conclusion*

This paper has examined how co-production can provide a practical and ethical response to inequalities that shape organisational and community

life. By situating the research within the framework of epistemic justice, the study highlighted how hierarchies of knowledge – much like those found in labour markets and organisational systems – can reproduce patterns of exclusion and marginalisation. The CBPR process led to the co-creation of the *Empowering Inclusion Toolkit*[65] and highlighted how collaborative approaches grounded in inclusivity can begin to challenge these hierarchies, enabling communities historically excluded from decision-making to reclaim agency and contribute to shaping their organisational futures.

This study has some limitations. The research focuses on a single community organisation and reflects the organisational and local context in which the transition towards a social enterprise took place. The findings are therefore not intended to be representative of all Black and racially minoritised-led community organisations or social enterprises. Further research involving different organisations and geographical contexts could examine how similar processes of organisational transformation and co-production develop in other settings.

The findings further note how inequalities are reproduced not only through economic and institutional structures but also through processes that determine whose knowledge is recognised as legitimate within organisational and policy environments. The study therefore contributes to more general discussions on epistemic justice by showing how participatory research processes can create spaces where community knowledge informs both organisational practice and research interpretation. In this case, this was achieved through the involvement of community members and stakeholders in the co-design of the research and the collective interpretation and refinement of the findings, which subsequently informed the development of the toolkit. The analysis also highlights the relevance of symbolic capital in understanding how legitimacy and recognition are distributed within institutional settings, often privileging actors whose knowledge aligns with dominant organisational norms. By embedding participatory elements within the research design, the CBPR approach adopted in this study enabled alternative forms of knowledge to play a more visible role in shaping both the analytical framework and the practical toolkit produced through the project.

Ultimately, the findings from this case suggest that inclusive and community-led social enterprises can provide opportunities for epistemic justice

[65] Aa.Vv., *Empowering Inclusion: Toolkit*, cit.

through the recognition and inclusion of community knowledge. Through processes of co-creation and participatory knowledge production, such initiatives can also create opportunities to challenge existing hierarchies of recognition and contribute to more equitable forms of organisational development and community participation.

Abstract

The paper examines how co-production can support inclusive knowledge ecosystems and equitable organisational transformation in community settings. Drawing on a case study of a Black and racially minoritised-led community initiative transitioning towards a social enterprise model, the research adopted a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach based on semi-structured interviews with community organisation members and consultations with stakeholders. Using the concepts of epistemic justice and symbolic capital, the paper explores how community knowledge and lived experience can inform organisational change and contribute to shared understandings. The findings suggest that co-production can strengthen the recognition of community knowledge and support more inclusive organisational practices.

Keywords

Co-production, Community-based participatory research, Epistemic justice, Social enterprise, Symbolic capital.