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Displacement of the Scholar? Participatory Action Research Under COVID-19

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The impact of COVID-19 on conducting research is far-reaching, especially for those scholars working for or alongside communities. As the pandemic continues to create and exacerbate many of the issues that communities at the margins faced pre-pandemic, such as health disparities and access to resources, it also creates particular difficulties in collaborative, co-developed participatory research and scholar-activism. These forms of community engagement require the commitment of researchers to look beyond the purview of the racialized capitalist and neoliberal structures and institutions that tend to limit the scope of our research and engagement. Both the presence of the researcher within the community as well as deep community trust in the researcher is required in order to identify and prioritize local, often counter-hegemonic forms of knowledge production, resources, and support networks. The pandemic and similar conditions of crises has likely limited opportunities for building long-term, productive relationships of mutual trust and reciprocity needed for PAR while communities refocus on meeting basic needs. The pandemic has now not only exacerbated existing disparities and made the need for engaged, critical and co-creative partnerships even greater, it has also abruptly halted opportunities for partnerships to occur, and further constrained funds to support communities partnering with researchers. In this paper we highlight accomplishments and discuss the many challenges that arise as participatory action researchers are displaced from the field and classroom, such as funding obstacles and working remotely. An analysis of experiences of the displacement of the scholar exposes the conflicts of conducting PAR during crises within a state of academic capitalism. These experiences are drawn from our work conducting PAR during COVID-19 around the globe, both in

urban and rural settings, and during different stages of engagement. From these findings the case is made for mutual learning from peer-experiences and institutional support for PAR. As future crises are expected, increased digital resources and infrastructure, academic flexibility and greater consideration of PAR, increased funding for PAR, and dedicated institutional support programs for PAR are needed.

Keywords: participatory action research, academic capitalism, COVID-19, community engagement, scholar activism, institutional support, participatory methodology, participation

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has been particularly effective at exposing and exacerbating inequality and injustices (Dorn et al., 2020). Widening disparities in access to food, healthcare, and housing have resulted in increased rates of malnourishment and homelessness, and exposed the classist, patriarchal, racialized and racist structures that often produce and maintain these disparities. Rates of hunger are doubling around the world, even in wealthy countries like the U.S., where many communities continue to experience food insecurity. Income and wealth inequalities have likewise grown and exacerbated the commodification and financialization of housing resulting in increased housing precarity and homelessness. Meanwhile, the climate crisis also continues to worsen and wreak havoc in many parts of the world, producing new forms of precarity and uncertainty in some neighborhoods, while others already on the edge become more vulnerable.

Community resilience to crises is rooted in deep and trusting relationships and ecological knowledge (Gómez-Baggethun et al., 2012; Aldrich and Meyer, 2015), and the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly effective at disrupting and fracturing relationships, thereby challenging sources of community trust and resilience. As people have been required to quarantine or reduce movement outside, many have been isolated and displaced from their everyday lives, their communities, coworkers, and their families and friends. Scholars are no exception, and have also been displaced from their classrooms and students, along with their field sites and their research. This scholarly displacement is particularly salient with scholar activists and those involved with participatory action research (PAR) (Muñoz et al., 2021). The displacement of the activist-scholar comes at a time when there is dire need for more action-research scholarship that centers on the knowledges and experiences of those communities on the frontlines of ecological, economic, and health crises—all raging in the wake of COVID-19 and other on-going crises, such as anthropogenic climate change. Yet, although inequalities and injustices laid bare under COVID have intensified activism in some instances around the world (Mendes, 2020; Marshburn et al., 2021), PAR has been significantly hampered during COVID-19. In other words, impacts of the pandemic have added urgency to the issues that communities are facing, while hindering relationships between the scholar and community, and disrupting PAR methodologies for many communities and researchers alike. The dynamic and collaborative nature of PAR and the sheer logistical challenges that come with community-based research have also become more difficult during the pandemic.

Another challenge to PAR scholars that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis is the increasing neoliberalization of academic institutions. Over the last several decades, research and higher education models have been restructured toward privatization and commercialization, with focus on generating revenues, and managing professionals (Jessop, 2017, 2018). This restructuring has inserted universities as players in the marketplace blurring the limits "between universities, the state, the non-profit sector, and the market" (Brackmann, 2015, p. 120; see also Rhoades and Slaughter, 1997; Münch, 2014). Similarly, market-oriented financial practices have transformed the ways in which universities and academic institutions engage with communities and the emphasis given to community-based projects, outreach and research. Neoliberalization has also formalized who can participate in these spaces of learning and how knowledge production occurs, with emphasis on knowledge as an economic asset and measured through quantitative metrics often in the form of number of publications and citations (Jover, 2020).

Within this model, the significance of a college education has shifted from the promotion of a liberal arts education to one focused on preparing students to be "job-ready" upon graduation. As such, although service learning and community outreach programs have become increasingly commonplace in higher education institutions, they are often seen as a form of "professional development", used to enhance the college experience and help prepare students for the "real world", despite the narrative emphasis on "community" and "engagement" (Cantor et al., 2014; Holley and Harris, 2018). This practice recalls the history of using communities as "learning labs", where it was uncritically assumed that by sending out students to "do good", community benefits would be accrued. As such, community engagement and PAR, centered on cultivating genuine forms of co-production of knowledge and when done well,[1] are often at odds with the capitalist model of commodified education and knowledge production. The values of solidarity and social justice that underpin PAR methodological approaches often conflict with and challenge economic priorities and neoliberal structures now increasingly promoted by academic institutions (Brackmann, 2015).

[1] See https://organizingengagement.org/models/participatory-action-research-and-evaluation/ for case studies of PAR conducted "done well".

While academic institutions continue to support PAR scholars in a number of ways, there is concern that this continuing shift toward academic capitalism and neoliberal restructuring limit opportunities for meaningful and radical collaboration between universities, researchers and communities (Ozias and Pasque, 2019). These concerns are particularly relevant now, under COVID-19, which has challenged social and economic structures at all levels. How the COVID-19 crisis is exacerbating structural issues in the academy has begun to be identified in the literature, pointing to the emerging evidence that shows that the "coronavirus pandemic has (re)produced further academic inequalities," at all scales, particularly for early career academics (Davies et al., 2021, p. 3). There has been less engagement however, with the "intersection of community engagement and neoliberal policies, practices, and logics" (Brackmann, 2015, p. 116), which the current crisis is also affecting.

Drawing on our own experiences as PAR scholars under COVID-19, this paper reflects on the challenges and opportunities of doing PAR work during a pandemic crisis and lockdown, and the lessons learned during this period. The authors of this paper conducted a shared analysis of our nine PAR-based case studies during the COVID-19 pandemic to elucidate a range of experiences, including the institutional barriers and supports that impacted our work with and for the community. More specifically, we reflect on our displacement from these communities, the reliance on digital methodologies, and the role of the university in supporting PAR and promoting community engaged research and projects during the pandemic and within academic capitalism. Through this reflection on our experiences we identify and explore: (1) the temporalities of the impacts of the pandemic on PAR and (2) the academic institutional factors that have shaped PAR during the pandemic. The PAR projects included here showcase the strengths and weaknesses of working remotely and the impacts of the pandemic on the scholar. Not only has COVID-19 highlighted how PAR and scholar activism are more relevant and necessary than ever before, but it has also highlighted the need for broader academic and institutional support in anticipation of future crises.

PAR Under Academic and Racial Capitalism

Over the last decades, research and higher education models have been restructured toward economic interests through privatization and commercialization, with a focus on generating revenue, and producing professionals for the market-place (Jessop, 2017, 2018). A growing body of literature across disciplines has engaged with this restructurating, identifying the emergence of "academic capitalism" which portrays the advancement of entrepreneurial models in education and research, as well as the reduction of public resources (Rhoades and Slaughter, 1997; Slaughter and Leslie, 2001). This shift has resulted in new intermediating organizations that foster market-like behaviors, expand managerial capacity, and create new circuits of knowledge tied to capitalist logics (Metcalfe, 2010; Jessop, 2017). Community engagement and PAR—which are centered on cultivating forms of co-production of knowledge that critically address socio-economic hierarchies and promote values of solidarity and social justice—are often at odds with the commodified model of education and knowledge production (Brackmann, 2015).

These structural issues emergent with academic capitalism have long been highlighted and challenged by Indigenous and Black scholars in both the decolonial and Black Radical Tradition. Robinson (1983), in his influential work on the Black Radical Tradition, coined the term "racial capitalism" to argue that capitalism is inherently racialized, whereas, "Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups" (Melamed, 2015, p. 77). This inequality, vis-à-vis the historical and material structures of colonization, is predominantly based on a patriarchal system and the othering and racialization of specific peoples to support their exploitation. Indigenous scholar Leann Betasamosake Simpson points out that educational systems "are primarily designed to produce communities of individuals willing to uphold settler colonialism" (Simpson, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, universities across the world are often physically built on the stolen land of Indigenous peoples, while historically excluding Black and Indigenous students, and perpetuating an ontology that erases and devalues Indigenous and Black knowledges (Freire, 1968; Robinson, 1983; McLaughlin and Whatman, 2011; Simpson, 2014; Mbembe, 2016). These structures perpetuate patriarchal, racialized and colonial harms, which are then exacerbated and furthered by the exploitation of academic capitalism. Arguably, academic capitalism itself is built on the material histories of Black and Indigenous exclusion. These structures of inequality sever relationships by separating scholars from both these communities and their specific sites of knowledge production, hindering potential emancipatory collaborations and research pathways that can challenge these systems.

Gender and whiteness (and white supremacy) are imbricated in capitalism, and academic capitalism is no exception. The struggle against racism, patriarchy and capitalism in academia is longstanding and ongoing. Historically, groups such as women and Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPoC) scholars have been marginalized by the power structures of academia. Domosh (2000) outlines her transgressions of studying "women" as setting her back in terms of the job search. Eaves (2019) reflects on the challenges inherent to examining feminist and gender geographies as well. She states that "our national undercurrent is materialized on stolen land, structured on white supremacy, and rooted in the rise of colonialism, imperialism and capitalist exploitation. That system must be continuously examined, critiqued, and dismantled from multiple analytical frames in order to advance struggles for justice and liberation, which are at the core of inquiry in feminist and gender geographies" (p. 1319).

It is on this foundation that the academy is built. Inequities in the Academy have been called out by many Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and critical scholars who argue that it perpetuates inequalities already present within society (Domosh, 2005; Castañeda, 2018; Eaves, 2019; Kidman, 2020). The pursuit of advanced degrees is expensive, causing students without

generational wealth (often stemming from a historical lack of access and privilege) additional stress as they work as underpaid graduate assistants or are forced to self-fund their already under-funded research. Hamilton (2020, p. 300) recalls the alienation she experienced in a discipline drenched in whiteness and colonialism. She notes that institutional calls to action against racist policing and declarations of solidarity with Black Lives Matter rang as virtue signaling. She refers to geography as "the realm of the white unseen" in reference to this lack of self-insight that the discipline has long practiced, not to mention the violence that the academy perpetuates against people of color, such as the tenure denial of deserving academics, most recently, as in the case of Nikole Hannah Jones at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and Cornell West at Harvard University.

In relation to PAR, scholars' connection to underserved, potentially vulnerable, and even invisible communities is not a given. Further, lack of university support for community-engaged work results in a loss of insight about the world that cannot be recouped through the workings of academic capitalism. Oswin (2020) points to a rising solidarity among "Others" that have been harmed by and marginalized by academia even among institutional calls for "diversity". Losing BiPoC, queer, and women scholars has resounding effects on the very knowledge claims that geography and other disciplines can make.

PAR is about collaborating with the community in all parts of the research (e.g., research design and knowledge production) and this is not compatible with relationships that extract, exploit, and exclude, i.e., supremacist and rigid hierarchical systems. When done well, PAR is directly counter to academic capitalism, and to the dominant power structures of the neoliberal university. It can disrupt formal, and unresponsive systems by challenging how an institution that is not egalitarian can be entrusted to conduct PAR and assist communities. As a result, PAR scholars working within the system often need to fight against internal pressures and funding priorities to have their work recognized, or they risk being displaced. The kinds of knowledge and power, such as local ecological knowledge and social capital, that support community and ecological resilience and regeneration in the face of major crises (e.g., pandemics, earthquakes, hurricanes, economic depressions), are the very kind that PAR scholars from diverse disciplines have practiced for decades, and even during the pandemic (Macaulay, 2017).

The neoliberal university limits those opportunities and the kinds of partnerships and projects that advance social justice and socio-ecological resilience. Declining state support for public services has put pressure on universities to simultaneously espouse a public good mission, and to extract what returns they can through academic capitalism practices (Rhoades and Slaughter, 1997; Brackmann, 2015). For example, in the U.S. there are 112 public universities that receive federal funding to benefit society through teaching, research, and extension. While these land-grant universities are tasked with reducing economic and health inequalities, measuring success of faculty and programs only entails counting publications, citations, external funding awards, and patents (Gavazzi, 2020). Additionally, the dismantling of humanity departments and programs, and a shift by the National Science Foundation (NSF) to focus on economics, health, and national defense while stating that "research that is predominantly post-modern, post-structural, humanistic etc. is not a good fit" demonstrate only some of the many restrictions and limitations on research that are currently in place under an academic capitalist model (Eaves, 2019).

James et al. (2021) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity for a collective stock-taking, in which actors and stake-holders reconsider policy responses and pursue alternative, community-focused approaches. These approaches are essential in addressing issues of equity and power, affecting policy and providing communities with opportunities to contribute to an inclusive process that is cognisant of their needs (Afifi et al., 2020). By embedding ourselves with and within the many social justice movements and struggles, and working in traditionally marginalized communities, many of which have been highly impacted by the pandemic and lockdown, due in part to the failures, gaps or absence of government programs and support, PAR scholars can both contribute to and draw from this crisis moment and the community struggles and demands happening in different parts of the world. Along this same vein, PAR scholars have a unique opportunity to use this moment of crisis to consider research goals, the academic and funding structures within which they do research, and the ways in which our research and teaching roles can further challenge the neoliberal capitalist model. The COVID crisis has created a unique opportunity for people and societies to reconsider their lives. As people and communities leave their jobs, conduct labor strikes, demand social and racial justice, and push for better climate regulations, we in academia can also challenge the increasing neoliberalization of our institutions, and instead demand more accountability and institutional responsibility to the communities and societies in which our institutions are based.

Building Community Resilience in the Face of Crises Through PAR

Building strong interpersonal relationships and high levels of trust with community members is central to scholars undertaking PAR (Hall et al., 2021; Mokos, 2021). Participatory action-oriented community-engaged research requires an ethical commitment to the communities with whom we work; we must remain reflexively critical of our positions within the research and the influence of asymmetrical power relations inherent in the relationships we develop (Mokos, 2021). Despite these clear objectives, PAR is inherently messy and complex. Many of us work in communities that have experienced historical and ongoing structural forms of racism, marginalization, poverty and violence. For many communities, experiencing crisis or living with severe precarity and uncertainty was already part of daily life. In these contexts, PAR researchers, as (often) elite outsiders, need time to build relationships, understand community needs and demands, and learn to listen for what might go unsaid.

Crisis events like COVID-19 are shocking disturbances which can put these relationships at risk, lead us to reconsider our positionality in the context of emerging issues, and isolate the researcher from organizations and communities. Despite

these challenges, scholars have argued that community-based participatory action research remains one of the most effective ways to conduct research during periods of crisis (Afifi et al., 2020). While important questions must be asked regarding the vulnerability of the groups with which we may be conducting research (Hall et al., 2021), when done well, PAR can engage with vulnerable communities during these periods in order to overcome issues of equity and power (Afifi et al., 2020). Indeed, in many disaster situations communities themselves provide a knowledgeable network able to mobilize and react to the situation they face in effective ways (Schoch-Spana et al., 2007; Cho et al., 2021). PAR scholars can both provide support through relationships and partnerships, as well as through knowledge and data production. These relationships can in turn help to improve civic preparedness for disasters by creating opportunities for communities to contribute to preparedness policy and its implementation (Schoch-Spana et al., 2007).

The requirement to remain socially-distant and protect community members presented a significant challenge to building the trust and close collaborations at the core of PAR. To overcome this challenge and continue advancing scholarship requires a sudden reliance on digital technology such as video conferencing to facilitate meetings with community members and organizations, which significantly alters the nature of scholar community interactions. Embracing these innovative methods requires establishing the capacity for both researchers and participants to work with the necessary tools and to give appropriate regard to the ethical and privacy issues associated with the use of such technologies (e.g., Nguyen et al., 2020). Hall et al. (2021) have argued that the digital divide is less about a country's wealth and more about the communities whose digital knowledge and usage practices were already less than optimal before COVID-19. This point is further reiterated by Lourenco and Tasimi (2020) who recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in a reliance on digital and online measures to gather data and as a result has excluded many different communities.

In these contexts, collective power is built through awareness, reciprocity, and strong relationships of trust that community members create with each other, organizations, scholars and other institutions. Through these practices and partnerships, communities can creatively and cooperatively resource needs for security, belonging, and dignity, and cultivate resilience (Haines, 2019). This is the kind of knowledge and power through which resilient communities have created robust structures of mutual aid, community land trusts, and cooperative enterprise that have operated outside of oppressive, supremacist power regimes. Community-partnered research helps document racist discrimination (Orozco et al., 2018), while original research co-designed and co-authored with frontline community leaders (Fagundes et al., 2020) serves to inform movements and support their outreach for more accountable policy [see Rural Coaltiion's USDA Climate Comments (see text footnote 1), which use original maps and findings from Fagundes et al., 2020]. Community resilience research finds that indicators such as local and traditional ecological knowledge, strength of social networks, and degree of place attachment have all been tied directly to adaptation capacity in the face of disaster (Koh and Cadigan, 2008; Wind and Komproe, 2012; Prior and Eriksen, 2013; Martin et al., 2017; Houston, 2018). This knowledge is emplaced (e.g., in particular geographies), embedded (within particular communities, cultures, and social networks), and embodied (in the lived experience of human beings living in diverse physical bodies). PAR methodologies are designed to cultivate these forms of emplaced, embedded, and embodied knowledge and build collective power. These partnerships and methodologies therefore rely on working on the ground, in the community, being seen by community members and also working closely with them.

METHODS AND CASE STUDIES

In order to identify (1) the temporalities of the impacts of the pandemic on PAR and (2) the academic institutional factors that have shaped PAR prior and during the pandemic, we drew from a diverse set of PAR projects that we conducted (or attempted to conduct).[2] The resulting author team is composed of a group of scholar activists bound not by a specific project, but by a shared vision of academia as an asset for the community (**Table 1**). Calls for case studies were placed on several online email lists[3] and shared between personal networks. Authors' work is with and for diverse communities, such as migrant farmworkers, Indigenous and queer communities, youth in the urban periphery, and urban housing coalitions. These communities are located in the global North (Canada, UK, and the US) and the South (Brazil, Mexico, and Peru). The projects were at different stages of development when the pandemic started, and include projects that were initiated during the pandemic. The authors make up a group of international scholars at different career stages (students, research staff, and early, mid-career faculty), from a representative set of institutes (teaching, research, small, and large). Our methodological approaches were equally diverse, and include a wide ranging set of tools to meet the needs expressed by our community partners, such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and digital, community and participatory mapping techniques.

These methodological approaches were impacted by the pandemic in different ways and in varying degrees (see **Table 1**). Over the course of several months, we individually and collectively (through digital meetings) reflected on our experiences conducting PAR during the pandemic. Several themes emerged; such as methodological issues and successes of conducting PAR remotely, the heterogeneous effects of the pandemic on scholars due to their positionality, and the

[2]Note that several of the authors have personal experience with COVID-19, as family, friends, or themselves contracted COVID-19 prior to or during the writing of this manuscript.

[3]The email lists used to advertise the call include: the Critical Geography listserv crit-geog-forum@jiscmail.ac.uk, the Participatory Geographies Research Group of the Royal Geographic Society listserv pygywg@jiscmail.ac.uk, the Scholar Activist listserv scholaractivists@lists.riseup.net, the Community Geographies Collaborative https://cgcollaborative.org/, and the American Association of Geographers Food and Agriculture Specialty Group's Food Justice Scholar-Activist/Activist-Scholar Community of Practice https://gfasg.wordpress.com/activist-scholarship/.

TABLE 1 | Participatory action research project descriptions.

Case study	Community location(s)	Type of study	Type of PAR	Research design pre-COVID-19	Research design during/post-COVID-19	COVID impact	Related works	Investigator(s)
Equitable development planning to fight urban displacement in a US city	US city	Participatory action research, policy advocacy	Community engaged participatory mapping and data analysis, collaborative policy development	Interviews, mixed-methods	Digital communication, quantitative analysis	Increased housing precarity for community members. Reduced community engagement, unable to visit communities, and loss of interviewing opportunities	Muñoz et al. (2021)	Jeremy Auerbach, Solange Muñoz, Elizabeth Walsh, Alex Cooper
Impact of community-based forest conservation and management in Indigenous and campesino communities	Oaxaca (MX)	Forestry policies analysis, commons management	Community engaged participatory mapping	Interviews, participant observation, participatory mapping, archive, videography	Reaserch stopped	Community research stopped, unable to visit communities, and documentary film production delayed		Geronimo Barrera
Youth everyday experiences and adaptive practices to resource scarcity (food, water, energy) and disaster risk	Sao Paulo (BR)	Participatory youth action research	Youth-led community engagement (aged 12-18) and co-production of knowledge, reflection-action approach	Face-to-face university extension course implemented at two community social centres, including activities such as youth-led community walks, photo-voice, participatory risk mapping, community theatre, community journal, multi-stakeholder dialogue	Online university extension course delivered through online groups, including photo-voice, videos, introduction to digital risk mapping, weekly assignments, online group discussions and individual interviews	Suspension of research for several months. The project was adapted into an online format however, the community social centres struggled with digital exclusion before they received the necessary equipment. Digital exclusion of vulnerable youth (lack of access to phones or internet) also remained a key issue over the entire course of project implementation.	Börner (2021)	Susanne Börner
Civil Soceity Organisations in the UK	Several UK cities (New Castle, London, etc.)	Planning policy recommendation	Community engagement	Focus group meetings, Qualitative analysis	Online survey, documentary analysis	Reduced community engagement, change of the type of research methods	Cho et al. (2021)	Lucy Natarajan, Elisabeta Ilie, Hyunji Cho
Queer Displacement in Atlanta, GA and Queer Burlesque	Atlanta, Georgia (US)	Ethnographic and observational	Participant observation	Interviews, Participant Observation, Archival	Remote interviews	Social connections & community events were cancelled during the pandemic and libraries and archives were closed, making gathering resources difficult. Mental health impacts from isolation.	Cofield (2021)	Rachael Cofield

(Continued)

TABLE 1 | Continued

Case study	Community location(s)	Type of study	Type of PAR	Research design pre-COVID-19	Research design during/post-COVID-19	COVID impact	Related works	Investigator(s)
The Valverde Movement Project	Valverde neighborhood, Denver, Colorado (US)	Mobility planning	Community engagement, story mapping	N/A (started during COVID)	Mixed methods	Challenges in developing relationships of trust and reciprocity, however the breadth of academic and mobility collaborators able to be reached was enhanced because of the online environment	https://bit.ly/ValverdeMovementProject21	Elizabeth A. Walsh, Cara Marie DiEnno
Disparity to parity: Balancing the scales of agricultural policy for justice & resilience	US	Agricultural policy, synthesis, analysis, advocacy	Frontline Grassroots Coalition-led action-research collaboration	Plans for an in-person write-shop and rural farm/border/community organization field site visits; applied for 3 USDA NIFA grants (not funded)	Digital communication, collaboration, and co-authorship; the new website (disparitytoparity.org) as hub for collective work, with in-kind pro-bono assistance	Added urgency to the topic of food/farm/land/labor/racial injustice in agricultural systems and policies	disparitytoparity.org	Garrett Graddy-Lovelace
Fairness, migrant justice & the organic movement in Canada	BC/Canada	Participatory Action Research, Collaborative Scholar-Activism	Interviews, participant observation, document review	N/A; nascent research that emerged from relationships that existed pre-COVID	Qualitative analysis (mixed primary data collection methods)	Enabled collaboration across space where virtual actions in solidarity and participation in gatherings would not have been possible. Also added urgency and created confusion and gaps in knowledge with rapidly changing employment/health and safety context. Limited opportunities for invaluable in-person interaction to build trust and explore possibilities for collaboration.	Klassen et al. (in press)	Susanna Klassen
Agrobiodiversity Nourishes Us/La Agrobiodiversidad Nos Nutre: Research-Action for Agroecological Transformations	Yucatan (MX); Lare (PE); Appalachian (US)	Agricultural policy analysis and laying out of agrobiodiversity research agenda/ethics	Encuentro Shared Analysis Sessions	Interviews	Digital communication methods; we pivoted what was going to be a 'Guidebook' into a multilingual, multimedia Special Feature at the open access journal Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene.	Community meetings cancelled; professional precarity for some research project co-leads		Veronica Limeberry, Garrett Graddy-Lovelace

institutional support (or lack thereof) for PAR during the crisis. The following section is an analysis of our experiences, followed by a discussion on our findings, with focus on both the limitations and opportunities that arose in the context of doing PAR in the context of a global pandemic and the neoliberal university. We conclude with recommendations for researchers, research funding organizations, and universities to better support PAR partnerships so that they are in place and prepared for future crises.

CONDUCTING PAR DURING COVID-19

Can PAR Be Remote?

COVID-19 pulled all of us out of the communities where we were working and locked us in our homes as we navigated the many uncertainties of the virus and its toll, with some of us even contracting the virus. During the early days of the pandemic, unpredictable and rapidly shifting government guidelines and information made planning difficult, if not impossible. New projects that started during COVID-19 lost their momentum, while other projects were temporarily suspended. For PAR researchers, who rely on partnerships and relationships that are often constructed on the ground, this digital shift initially created a lot of uncertainty and challenges as we all struggled to figure out what technologies were available, who had access to them, how they worked and the different ways in which they could be combined. However, as the pandemic progressed, we started to adapt our work despite the many limitations and the digital fatigue (both of researchers and participants) even as we all became much more familiar with the different technologies available, as well as more flexible and creative in adapting our research and objectives. While the utilization of online measures were helpful for all of us to quickly transition from in person to online meetings, it also impacted with whom and how we were able to communicate and the projects and objectives that came out of this new online form of communication. Our PAR projects demonstrate how different technologies worked in different contexts, often based on what people and communities were already using in each site.

Displacement of the Scholar-Activist

A significant way many of us were able to maintain relationships and build on our research was by working directly with social organizations who were already organized and in many cases functioned successfully online. This allowed us the possibility of shifting our work to an online platform that felt meaningful and already had an established online significance. With online presence now a common strategy for providing visibility to social organizations during the pandemic, organizations representing equity-deserving communities were already present in some online capacity, which made adjusting to online partnerships relatively easy. This allowed some of us to continue our partnerships and develop innovative ways and opportunities to rework research and project objectives. For example, drawing on their online work with different organizations and working with American University's Center for Environment, Community and Equity,[4] author GGL hosted a 2021 Earth day virtual webinar for nearly 500 registrants. Authors JA, SM, and EW were also able to interact with the community organization they worked for, as this organization had access to Zoom and a resident interpreter (Muñoz et al., 2021). Author SK's PAR also evolved through virtual collaboration around webinars, and was made possible because of the commitment of the community organization she works with (Fuerza Migrante) to continuing engagement in a virtual way through the pandemic, and other social movements organizations for creating online venues for these discussions (Klassen et al., in press). Thus, for some of us, these online transformations were positive, despite their limitations, and highlighted the importance of the organizational relationships on which PAR often relies, as necessary to their ability to move online.

Our discussions regarding the role of organizations in facilitating PAR also lead us to reflect on who was left out of this new COVID dynamic. Community organizations are important stakeholders and advocates for communities, as well as facilitators for researchers to enter into communities, however they cannot represent all community members and at times create or represent community divisions or conflicts. Although many of us were successful in maintaining close, and ongoing working relationships with organizations that led to online initiatives and projects, others discussed being isolated from the community because organization leaders abruptly halted communication. Without stronger relationships with the community residents and other members of the organization, authors JA, SM, and EW were left to try to understand what had happened to the partnerships they were trying to foster (Muñoz et al., 2021).

At the same time, in another project, instead of working with organizations, author RC was able to create community partnerships with individuals through local, intentionally ephemeral events. Although these events stopped entirely during the pandemic, thanks to these established relationships prior to the pandemic, author RC was able to maintain meaningful and strong relationships with participants and the broader community during lockdown. Similarly, the relationships in some ways changed online, allowing researchers and participants alike to reimagine these partnerships and objectives, and to consider future opportunities and research frameworks.

The Shift to Digital PAR

The ways in which each of us "resolved" the COVID-19 dilemma of not being in close contact with our partners involved different online formats of "formal" and "informal" means of communication, with limitations that included issues such as language, age, infrastructure, and the different stakeholders involved. Although countries with existing access to advanced technological frameworks were assumed to be less affected than developing countries without the same infrastructure in place, in reality our PAR programs conducted COVID-19 highlight that the digital divide was not so clear. None of the communities with which we worked were completely isolated and in some cases, in

[4]https://www.american.edu/centers/cece/

countries like Mexico and Brazil, daily technology like WhatsApp facilitated authors' connections with participants on a daily basis and/or in more informal conversations, than the more formalized Zoom meeting settings.

Author GBT described how he had been forced to leave the communities where he was conducting interviews and mapping workshops, canceling many planned activities. Nevertheless, he remains in contact with community members using WhatsApp, with "voice messages our preferred means of communication, particularly because the residents speak Chatino, a language that does not have a written form. We have even used [voice messages] to discuss [important] concepts, and I use it to continue learning the language and to ask questions when I am translating interviews." Author SB used WhatsApp as a way to employ PAR methods with the help of community social centers that facilitated contact with São Paulo youth. Author SB used WhatsApp to digitally develop activities that were no longer possible in person. Although "translating these dynamic activities into WhatsApp had certain limitations [with] youth falling back into participant roles [instead of] being co-creators of the whole process", author SB was able to use WhatsApp for a variety of activities such as photo-voice and group discussions, including even more practical activities where participants made recycled objects from plastic bottles and shared photos with the group. In this way, WhatsApp has facilitated both long-term relationships through informal contact and also allowed for the sharing of more structured activities for data and data collection.

Interestingly, the use of "informal" technology, like WhatsApp may be more successful when conducting research with communities in conditions of vulnerability, particularly in countries like Brazil or Mexico where it is widely used as a main means of communication. Additionally, these examples showed how WhatsApp helped reduce digital exclusion of hard to reach, vulnerable social groups. The digital methods that we chose and the rhythms of communication that we adopted were often based on the suggestions and needs of social organizations and participants' preferences and personalities. The authors' experiences showed that interaction worked best where we did not try to impose something new, but rather worked with what participants felt most appropriate and accessible. Although WhatsApp was a valuable tool available to some of us, others shifted to more "formal" modes of digital communication using Zoom and other teleconferencing applications, with mixed outcomes. This shift to remote PAR "took courage to allow for mistakes and imperfection in order to try out new formats and to get out of our comfort zone" (Börner, 2021).

Unlike authors GGL and VL, who were working with organizations that were already online, SB discussed some of the initial challenges faced by the social organizations with whom she was working, that did not have the technological capacity at the beginning of the pandemic (such as work phones and laptops). Understaffing was also a problem, since many social organizations were addressing many of the sudden community needs and demands, like emergency food aid, that the COVID-19 lockdown originally caused. Authors JA, SM, and EW also struggled to build relationships of trust and support, as the organization they were working became increasingly overwhelmed as they scrambled to provide emergency food aid, access to emergency welfare assistance and basic knowledge to a large Latino immigrant population (Muñoz et al., 2021). These issues are further compounded with time zone difference, unequal internet access, and unconventional living arrangements.

Emerging Opportunities

As discussed earlier, the shift to digital created many opportunities for many of the authors. Authors GGL and VL describe how "the online mode of organizing allowed us to expand our reach and correspondence domestically and even internationally". They describe how their project "Disparity to Parity to Solidarity: Balancing the Scales of Agricultural Policy for Justice and Resilience" (D2P, dispartitytoparity.org) which was already largely a virtual endeavor in part due to lack of funding, was cited by Indian agrarian leaders during the ongoing Indian Farmer Uprisings which called for minimum support prices and guaranteed markets for diverse growers to stave off corporate capture. Authors GGL and VL suggest that because of this online pivot, methodologies and online activities actually "became broader, more regular, more diverse and more integrative in shared, digital formats". Similarly, for author SK, who was already physically distanced from the communities with whom she was working, "the lockdown changed perspectives on what was keeping us apart. Geographical distance diminished as a factor that might otherwise prevent working together across great distances and borders". She continues to say, "In my experience with this PAR project, COVID actually opened up opportunities to feel proximity more as a sense of shared goals and values, which is what enabled our collaboration to continue and even grow, despite the COVID crisis." Many of us shared similar experiences–although starting from a place of uncertainty and projects changed, often in significant ways, we were able to make things work and advanced meaningful partnerships and projects, sometimes even because of the conditions created by the pandemic.

These opportunities were also accompanied by the limits and inevitable exclusions of digital technologies. As authors JA, SM, and EW describe, after large meetings with multiple stake-holders, two languages, and technical glitches, they missed the opportunities for the small talk and watercooler moments; conversations before or after meetings with individuals, walking and chatting about informal issues, or engaging in non-work events, all of which contribute to relationship building and trust, and provide a framework for project development and innovation. Author SB described how she initially lost participants who had originally signed up to do a face to face extension course. Going online meant recruiting new participants willing to do the activities online. Although she was successful in her ability to recruit a new cohort, author SB explained how, "reaching hard to reach groups such as vulnerable youth in the urban periphery was already challenging pre-pandemic, and the COVID-19 crisis only exacerbated the gap between urban centers and the periphery". Using email to reach out to participants, authors HC and LN stated that it was not easy to present the research as a collective endeavor in collaboration

with participants. They worried that the research would "be seen as using the data from participants purely for the purposes of researchers' academic objectives, rather than providing future benefits for community actors." They also highlighted how COVID-19 further isolated already equity-deserving individuals, explaining, "Many local participants, especially those who are less affluent, older or with lower education attainment were less likely to connect with local organizations through a digital platform."

As discussed above, virtual remote data collection during the displacement of the PAR researcher from the field during COVID-19 opened up a myriad of sub-challenges as well as opportunities. In **Table 2**, we provide a comprehensive view of the different scenarios of field research under COVID-19 based on our different experiences, to point out the key Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of virtual remote PAR. It is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to how PAR was conducted under COVID-19, and our PAR programs highlight a heterogeneity of experiences, with sometimes similar but also contrasting experiences.

Conducting activities entirely online furthermore raised various ethical and practical questions, such as concerns over trust-building, establishing connections and maintaining continuity. Some of the authors found creative approaches for trust-building, such as deep listening to the needs of community partners (including issues that were disconnected from the project) and following up with resources, data and connections; or dynamics such as using video calls, short videos and photos as a form of personal introduction. However, although some of the authors had already developed strong relationships they were able to build on, for many of us the online setting did not compensate for regular, informal and in-person trust-building opportunities, exacerbating the challenges of creating strong partnerships, especially with participants in conditions of digital vulnerability.

Institutional Support and the Impacts of COVID-19 on PAR Scholarship

The pandemic not only created opportunities and barriers to PAR methods, it has also affected us within our institutes and the broader Academy. We do not want to equate the weight of the impacts of COVID-19 on equity-deserving communities with those on scholars, yet want to mention the ways in which scholars have also been affected by the pandemic, particularly within those institutions and structures that have embraced academic capitalism as their *modus operandi*. Similarly, COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on the careers of academic researchers and PAR itself, as It is evident that it also perpetuated and exacerbated inequalities among scholar activists: students, staff, and faculty. In this section, we argue that although we have observed weakened interactions between universities and communities due to the COVID, it appears from the cases that the previously established relationships that exist before crises, can help to mitigate challenges during crises. Here we discuss the factors that limited and enabled relational activities of PAR and reflect particularly on the relationships between the university and the community in the context of power dynamics in relation to PAR scholars and the functioning of academia.

COVID-19 and the Impact on the Student Researcher

The majority of students are under institutional timelines and during the pandemic were not necessarily provided extensions on program requirements nor additional pay. Doctoral students were left scrambling to alter their projects under the pressure of institutional funding and program timelines. Although many of the projects included in this paper were successful in either completing or advancing their research, many projects that would have advanced PAR methods and methodologies had to be re-routed, delayed, or entirely canceled. Furthermore, many doctoral programs in Canada and the United States now only offer 4–5 years of funding, when PAR practices and other qualitative methods may require longer periods of relationship building and data collection. Author RC describes their experience of writing the dissertation during COVID-19 as a period of struggle and little guidance. "Research resources and materials were scarce, and Atlanta was shut down. Archives and libraries were closed, ensuring a lack of physical materials and [inability to conduct] archival research to complement what my participants were telling me." They continue to describe how, "I wrote my entire dissertation during the isolation of 2020 Atlanta. There was no vacation from COVID. There was no chance of reconnecting with participants and community friends and no talking through my findings in a communal space." COVID-19 also extended author RC's program, forcing them to pay for two semesters out of pocket, even while "cis white hetero men in my cohort year continued to receive funding". This sense of isolation and lack of emotional and financial support is widespread among graduate students and often goes unacknowledged by faculty and administration in normal times. COVID-19 exacerbated these conditions creating severely precarious conditions for many students. As author RC puts it, "There was a visceral trauma of COVID-19."

COVID-19 and the Impact on Faculty

The neoliberal turn of University systems in many countries around the world has radically transformed the hiring and support of faculty, who is able to receive this support, and how it is administered. Universities were quick to use the pandemic to increase austerity measures, implement hiring freezes, buy out contracts, and promote early retirement. COVID-19 also allowed for the hiring of more short-term and less stable faculty positions, like fixed-term adjunct and lecturer positions. In day-to-day operations, universities waited to announce whether classes would be in-person or virtual, while adjunct instructors had less flexibility in determining either their class schedules or even their own safety to teach. At the same time, some of us did receive support from our institutions in the form of tenure extensions, technological assistance and instruction, working from home, family leave, etc. In many ways, although tenure track faculty continued to feel the stress of working long hours and moving between teaching, administrative, and research responsibilities, the

TABLE 2 | Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis of PAR under COVID-19 using digital tools.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
- Expansion of activities/scope/target group/outreach. - New creative formats emerge (digital photo-voice, videos, text and audio communication, Zoom meetings, webinars, resource exchange, WhatsApp, email, group vs individual activities, ...). - Heterogeneity rather than a "1 size fits all" approach. - Traditional, "formal" channels of communication (e-mail, videoconferencing, …) may be complemented by new "informal" tools such as social media and WhatsApp (especially in Latin America where they have become an "institutionalized" form of communication). - Protects community members at risk (immunocompromised).	- Data collection largely depends on the quality of "relational groundwork" and established connections pre-COVID. - Hinders consensus building. - Presupposes access to technology through laptops/computers/smartphones and stable internet access. - Limitations to trust-building and creating connection with new participants using online tools. - difficulty of conveying the purpose of research through digital tools (e.g. email) instead of personal interaction. - Not all participatory activities can be transferred 1-to-1 into an online format and challenge of being participatory and inclusive. - Systemic inequalities exist and lead to digital vulnerability where low-income and rural populations experience unequal and low-quality access to technology/ broadband connection. - Use of digital tools requires a certain digital literacy as well as a certain sense of autonomy and self-confidence. - Technical issues hinder the "flow" of online activities (e.g. interference of others, noise disconnection of video (privacy), unstable internet connection, ...).
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
- New ownership and new formats may emerge. - Digital tools can also lead to more inclusion rather than exclusion and make participation broader, more regular, more diverse, and more integrative in shared, digital formats (such as webinars etc.). - Digital tools may facilitate shared analysis, debates, resource exchange, co-authorship, design and analysis, and co-editing. - Use of informal digital tools (e.g. WhatsApp) alongside more "formal" channels of communication can especially increase inclusivity and receptiveness by the target group. - New connections across time and space may emerge (inter-local, international, cross-sectoral, …). - A new sense of proximity may develop as a sense of shared goals and values enabling collaboration despite physical distance. - Greater digital literacy of the participants developed during COVID-19 (temporality). - May enable a different reflection on the sense of self. - Opportunities for research institutions and researchers to collaborate with diverse partners to redress harm and co-create equitable and regenerative pathways that spring forward from crises. - May allow for more often check-ins.	- Uncertainty in a rapidly changing situation and changing government guidelines create stress on researchers and participants. - Sharpening of already existing digital divides may increase the difficulty of reaching vulnerable local communities and may lead to an exclusion of those most equity-deserving (due to a lack of access to technology and/or internet) in equity-deserving communities. - Digital illiteracy can lead to a struggle with less "institutionalized" and new digital tools. - Age-related risks: young people (especially in low-income families) may not have access to an individual phone; less affluent, older, or less educated groups, may be less likely to connect through a digital platform. - Self-esteem and self-confidence which may be still fragile in many young people may limit their active participation in virtual settings. - Difficulty to accommodate diverse interests from multi-stakeholder participants when using for instance Zoom meetings and risk of domination of more confident participants over more quiet ones. - Going digital may lead to a shift from a relation of co-creators of knowledge back to researcher-participant dynamics. - Digital fatigue may take its toll on the continuity of participant engagement (temporality).

pandemic reinforced the institutional divisions between who is provided full support and funding opportunities, and those who are seen as temporary workers or figures in departments. These strategies entrenched inequalities at the university level while hindering participatory action and community-led/based research.

COVID-19 and the Support of Institutional Community Engagement Programs

Additionally, and surprisingly to some of us, many of the author-scholars included here, described how they benefited from the flexibility of institutional support of established community engagement offices or new initiatives to uplift and support scholars doing PAR.

Author EW found that the University of Denver's (DU's) Center for Community Engagement to advance Scholarship and Learning (CCESL) opened up diverse possibilities, since it already had a strong record of community-engaged research, through which it had established trusting relationships with community members as well as city officials, particularly through author CMD's field work. With healthy relationships already in place spanning sectors as well as academic institutions, CMD and EW were positioned to respond quickly to a call for proposals from a new NSF program, the CIVIC Innovation Challenge.[5] The strength of existing place-based relationships not only helped them secure the planning grant, it also enabled them to swiftly launch a collaborative, action-oriented, inter-institutional research initiative with neighborhood partners during the pandemic. The quarantine posed challenges—especially because the neighborhood they were partnering with had the highest hospitalization rates for COVID-19 in the city (Németh and Rowan, 2020). However, in other ways, the pandemic created

[5]https://nsfcivicinnovation.org/

a window of opportunity for them to do the kind of anti-racist, asset-based, intersectional, transdisciplinary, community-engaged, applied research to which they are committed. Similarly, the apocalyptic nature of 2020 (and visibility of social justice movements taking to the streets) revealed the profound structural disparities in our cities in ways that created opportunities to have more honest and open public conversations about infrastructural racism. This moment of opportunity helped their team galvanize collaboration among the 25 multi-sector partners. Moreover, because all members of the inter-institutional research team were local to Denver, when neighborhood leaders invited academic partners to support outreach efforts for their vaccination clinic, they were able to mobilize university resources to support tri-lingual flier design, printing, and door-to-door distribution.

Author SB's work in Brazil was greatly facilitated by the extension office at the University of São Paulo, which was open to adapting her course to an online format and to recruit new participants. As she explains, "when adapting to the digital, academic institutions showed a certain flexibility [making it possible] to change/delay the date for the extension course, to enroll additional students, and to send the inscription forms online". Similarly, the Community Engagement Partnership Recognition Fund[6] (PRF) from the University of British Columbia, which offers small grants for community partners in PAR partnerships, offered dedicated funds for projects that addressed the impacts of the pandemic. While the administration of these funds still present barriers for community partners, other accommodations like allowing oral progress reports by phone made the funding process less onerous for author SK's community partner.

Yet, there were concerns of lack of flexibility and support from institutions for us as scholars to operate beyond official roles. Nevertheless, these examples and case studies highlight both the opportunities and challenges for both doing PAR research under normal circumstances and the way these challenges and opportunities can be exacerbated and used in times of crisis. As author SB reflected, community engagement offices can "link universities closer to community stakeholders and establish partnerships for the future, which can facilitate new digital research projects and support researchers in identifying participants and deal with administrative requirements of funders and universities."

COVID-19 and Institutional/External Funding for PAR

Some of the early career researchers struggled against multiple barriers as a result of insufficient funding, lack of funding support and recognition, and funding time structures that did not take into account the challenges posed by a pandemic crisis. Several experienced a manufactured urgency from tight timelines. Authors CMD and EW found "an urgency arose from the inflexibility of the 4-month planning grant. This type of urgency is typical of white supremacist cultures, where rigid timelines reinforced by funders who expect too much for too little, often make it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic processes, think long-term, or learn from mistakes." Similarly, author SB found "as a postdoctoral researcher on a project with a limited duration, I also struggled with the lack of a cost-extension from the funders." Additional barriers were also discovered, such as the PRF grant awarded to author SK's partner organization, Fuerza Migrante, which required a charity number to process funds directly to the community partner, an extra level of bureaucracy that made getting material support to the community partner—the funding recipient—even more challenging. While many of us benefited from established community engagement offices or new initiatives to uplift and support scholars doing participatory work (e.g., the Public Scholars Initiative at the University of British Columbia), many of the authors had to find ways to overcome institutional barriers and continued to operate outside of institutional pathways, and found inspiration from communities themselves. For example, author JA was awarded a community grant but his institute requested 50% of the funds for University overhead despite all the research taking place within the community. To avoid these overhead costs and ensure that the funds would be allocated completely for PAR, author JA established himself as an independent consultant. This resulted in not only additional challenges for author JA, such as finding and purchasing professional liability insurance, but also severed a link between the community and the university.

In contrast to author JA's experience, other authors were able to continue their research with communities due to university funding and support despite COVID-19. In some cases, already established relationships between universities and local communities were conducive to aiding projects serving the public during the pandemic. Although the importance of universities' relationships with local communities was positive by some accounts, the understanding of the value of participatory research seemed to vary across academic institutions. Our PAR projects highlight a divergence in the support granted different actors, which depend greatly on their institutional positions and obligations, as well as the existing offices and programs, and duration of contracts. Those who had secured positions with sufficient research support, or who were at universities with community engagement offices tended to be able to continue their research. Several authors were awarded funding specific to community-focused COVID responses, such as the PRF grant awarded to author SK and the NSF Civic Innovation Challenge awarded to authors CMD and EW. According to authors CMD and EW "these reflect important paradigmatic shifts and expanded epistemological diversity in research funding. We encourage [grant providing organizations] to continue on an anti-oppression path and to continuously work to dismantle patterns of white supremacist culture within the institution."

CONCLUSION

While COVID-19 has demonstrated that participatory action research has never been more needed, the pandemic has also

[6]https://communityengagement.ubc.ca/our-work/partner-recognition-fund/

exacerbated the challenges of conducting PAR. As set out above, we reflected on our own research experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic to reflect on the challenges of doing PAR under quarantine and in the broader context of academic, patriarchal, and racial capitalism. The impacts of COVID-19 have not only laid bare the impacts of capitalism on community relationships, but also have highlighted how the neoliberal university model is unevenly providing resources with effects that have the potential to work against the general PAR ambition of broadening institutional engagement with communities. While there were instances where institutional supports enabled PAR to continue (or even catalyzed it in one instance), for the most part it was the commitment of the individuals involved; relationships held by researchers and community organizations (not universities) and the use of unconventional digital tools (e.g., WhatsApp and Zoom) that enabled PAR during the pandemic. In many ways we had to relearn and reevaluate how to do our work in ways that made it possible and that remained true to the nature of PAR. For those of us who had already established strong relationships with community members and organizations, the shift was often easier than many of us expected.

Despite being heterogeneous and not offering a one-size-fits-all approach, our experiences also show how beneficial mutual learning from peer-experiences can be. Hence, a coordinated information platform would be beneficial for peer-learning by listing tools for digital PAR aimed at researchers as well as community stakeholders seeking to reproduce certain interventions. In the early days of COVID-19, some websites and blogs emerged to list online tools for PAR. However, online collections of resources and tool guides for remote PAR are only available in a piecemeal fashion and do not sufficiently address the needs of digitally vulnerable populations. Moreover, most tools and suggestions are directed at English-speaking audiences. Our contribution seeks to provide a starting point for an international and global North-South dialogue which brings together PAR academic voices to document both formal and informal practices of digital engagement. It may also provide a stepping stone for building stronger networks, cooperations, and partnerships between universities and community partners.

Of course, scholar-community relationships are at the heart of trusting and equitable PAR work, but institutions can do more to create the conditions for and reduce barriers to creating and maintaining these relationships. Reflecting on the wider academic context, the analysis of these case studies provide insights on the direction and possible alternatives of institutional support for PAR. Even though there is no panacea outside a radical re-imagining of the Academy, several changes to the current academic system could be put forward. Firstly, increased institutional support and resources for digital work, such as community access to online tools and workshops. Second, halting the reliance on short-term positions and providing security of tenure, which is needed for morale and focus in long-term and relational work, and to recognize PAR scholarship in promotion. Third, the funding system needs to change to become more flexible (e.g., in terms of deadlines) and invested in smaller-scale community projects. Lastly, creating or expanding community-engagement programs or offices that (1) build capacity for anti-racist, equity-centered, intersectional, collaborative learning and action, and (2) provide the support PAR scholars need during future crises. This institutional support can help place researchers in an active and sustained role during crises instead of being reactionary, interrupted, and displaced.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JA and SM conceived the original idea. UA, JA, GB, SB, HC, RC, CD, SK, VL, SM, LN, AM, and EW contributed to the analysis and writing. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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