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Reflexivity in performative science shop projects

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Abstract

Science shop research projects offer possibilities for universities to engage with communities. Many science shop projects directly or indirectly intend to empower certain marginalised groups or interests within a decision-making process. In this article we argue that it is important to reflect on the role and position the researchers have in these projects. We present three science shop projects to illustrate some of the dilemmas that may arise in relation to citizen empowerment, democracy, and ethics in the field of action research and community engagement. We present reflexivity as a strategy for creating greater awareness of the power–knowledge relationship, the nature of the democratic process and the consequences of empowerment for other vulnerable groups.

Keywords: Action research, community engagement, reflexivity, science shop

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