

Research Ethics

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Classic ethics principles in participatory research

- Respect for **participant autonomy**: seek informed consent, allow people to opt out
- Respect for **participant welfare**: maintain participant privacy, provide same benefits (and risks) for all participants
- Respect for **justice**: determine participation fairly, identify and deal with your conflicts of interest
- ...

Sometimes the issues are rather subtle...

Even your ethics committee may not catch all cases.

Your university might tell you: “**you don’t need ethics clearance to analyse publicly available information**”.

Example:

Publishing contributor profiles

Your research entails the analysis of HOT contributor behaviour. You do not seek consent since your analysis is solely based on publicly available information.

Is it OK to make your results public?

Which of the following are acceptable to reveal?

- Usernames
- Edit location history
- Activity periods
- ...?

“Community-based participatory research — A guide to ethical principles and practice”

- Mutual respect
- Equality and inclusion
- Democratic participation
- Active (and mutual) learning
- Making a difference
- Collective action (working together to achieve change)
- Personal integrity

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/beacon/CBPREthicsGuidewebNovember20121.pdf>

A lot of this is contextual!

What counts as “mutual respect” depends on the situation, and even the person.

Researchers should take the time to understand community norms.

You should make your mutual expectations explicit!

Example:

Mapping party observation

Your research involves the observation of mapping party participants. You are planning to produce a video recording of the event.

What is a suitable form to seek consent?

- Mention in the event invitation email?
- Announcement at the start of the event?
- A signed consent form by every participant?
- ...?

Example:

Incentivising local mappers

You are trying to establish how best to motivate local volunteers to collect data for you in a developing country without existing OSM community.

You are considering the following incentives:

- Mapping as a rewarding social experience
- Mapping as a professional opportunity
- Mapping for social impact
- Financial or other material rewards

How might you structure your study?

Other scenarios...

Dual roles and conflicts of interest: when you're both a researcher and a community organiser.

Producing community surveys on a tight deadline.

Promoting your survey without spamming everyone.

The minimum you should expect from HOT researchers

- They spent time to get to know the community
- They introduce themselves and their research before they ask you to participate in their survey
- They did a few test runs first
 - On themselves, or with their students/colleagues
 - With a small number of community members

Thank you.