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Equality Literacy: Daring to Do Equality Based Practice and Research

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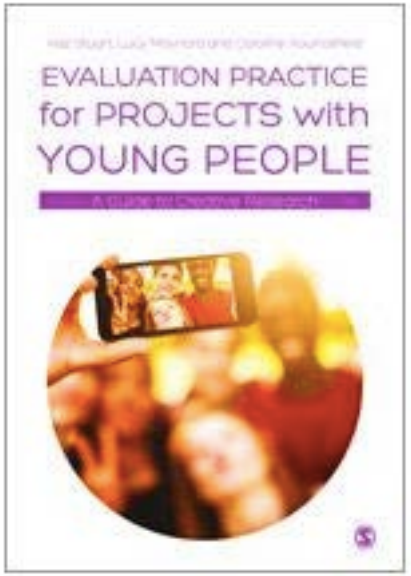
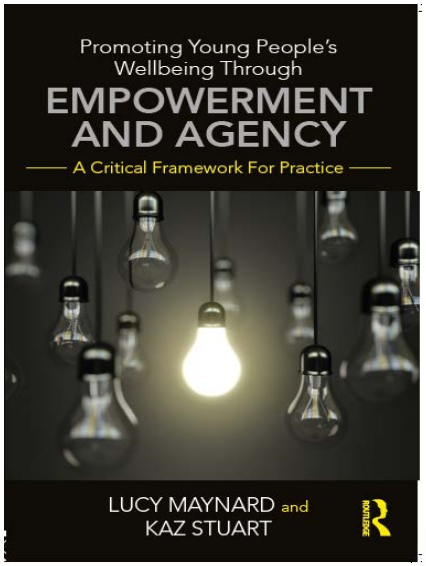
This session

- Part 1: Model of wellbeing development (empowerment and agency)
- Part 2: Equalities literacy – practice and research tool.



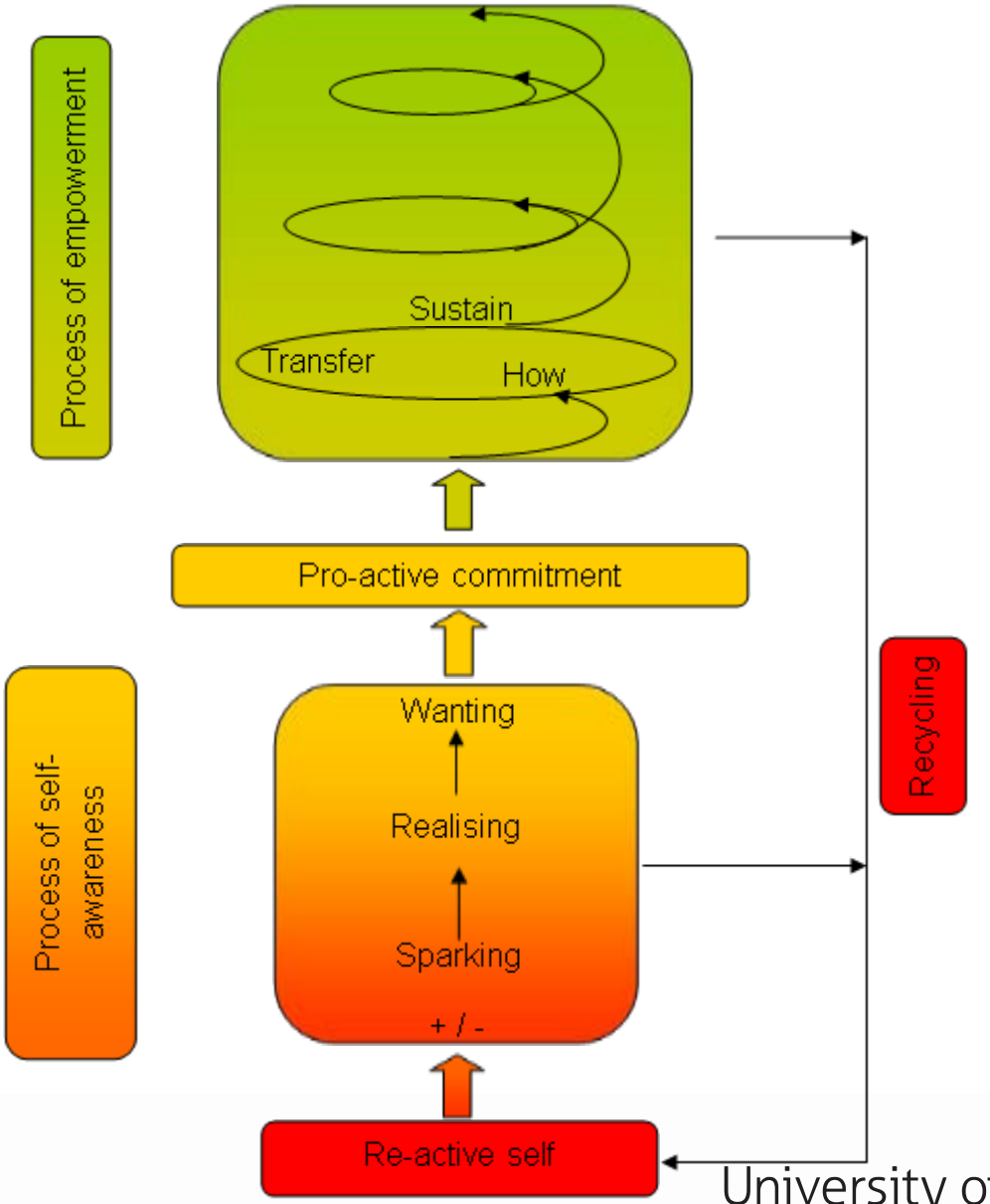


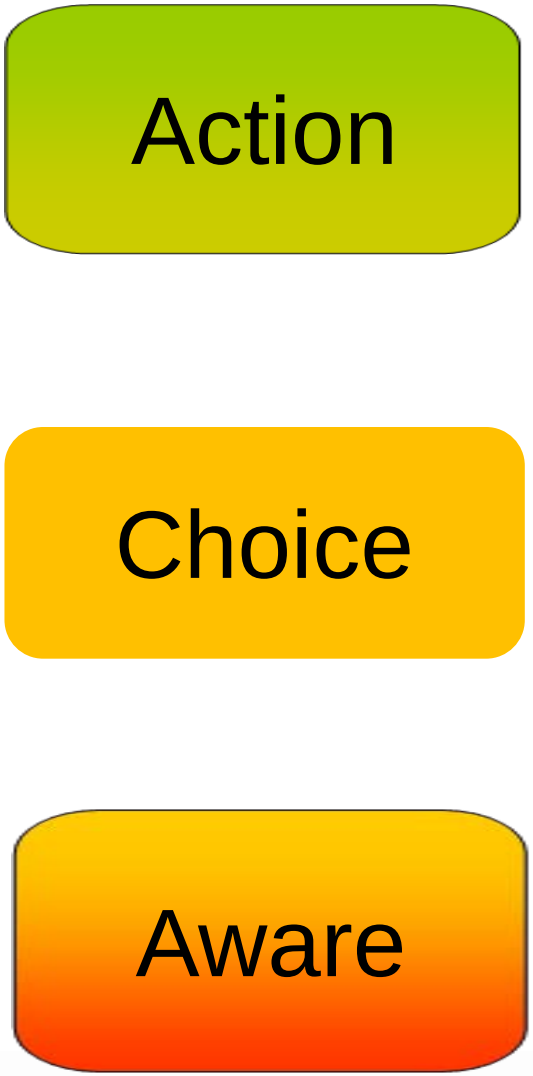
The Process of Empowerment

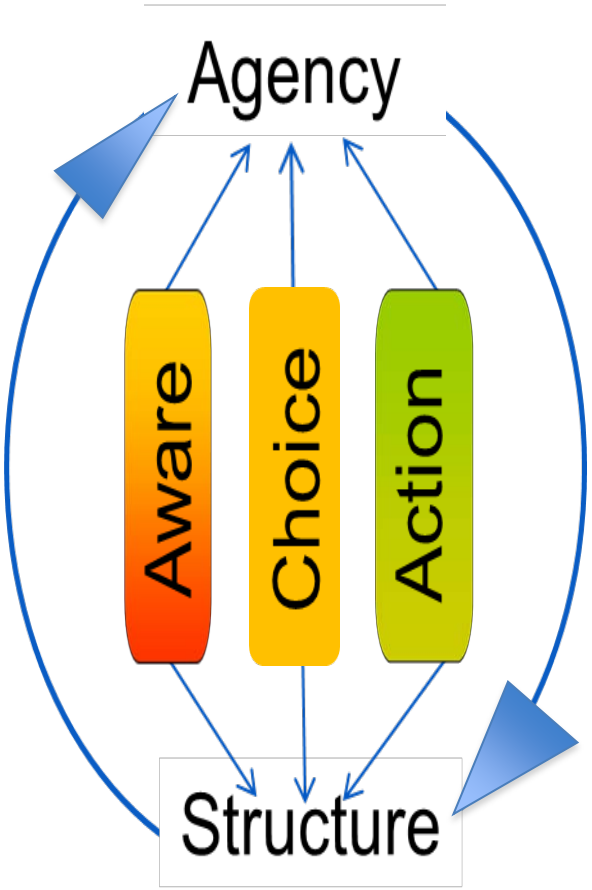
- Helping people gain greater control of their lives and circumstances…. (Thompson, 2007)

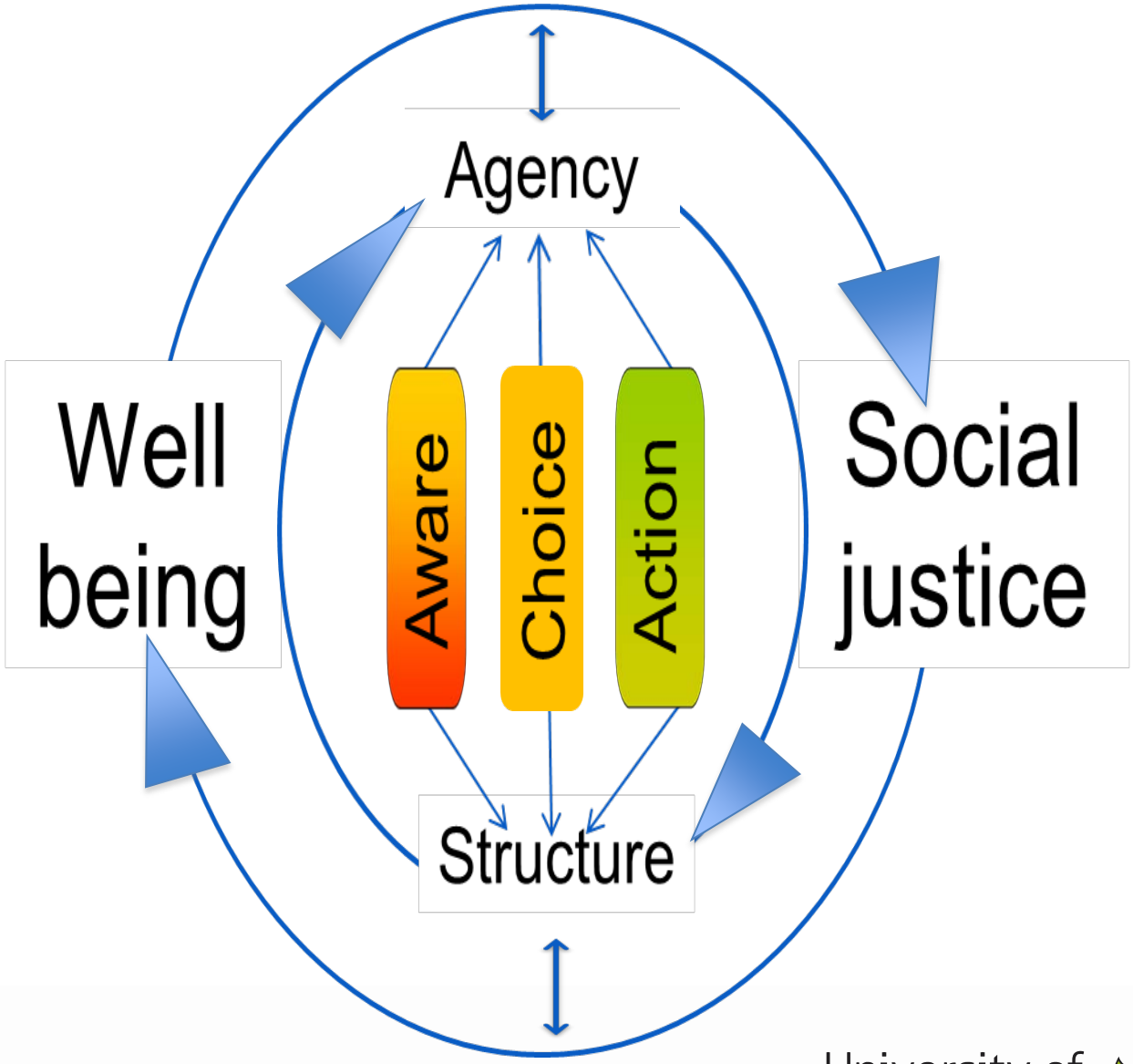
- … in order to maximize the quality of their lives (Adams, 2008)

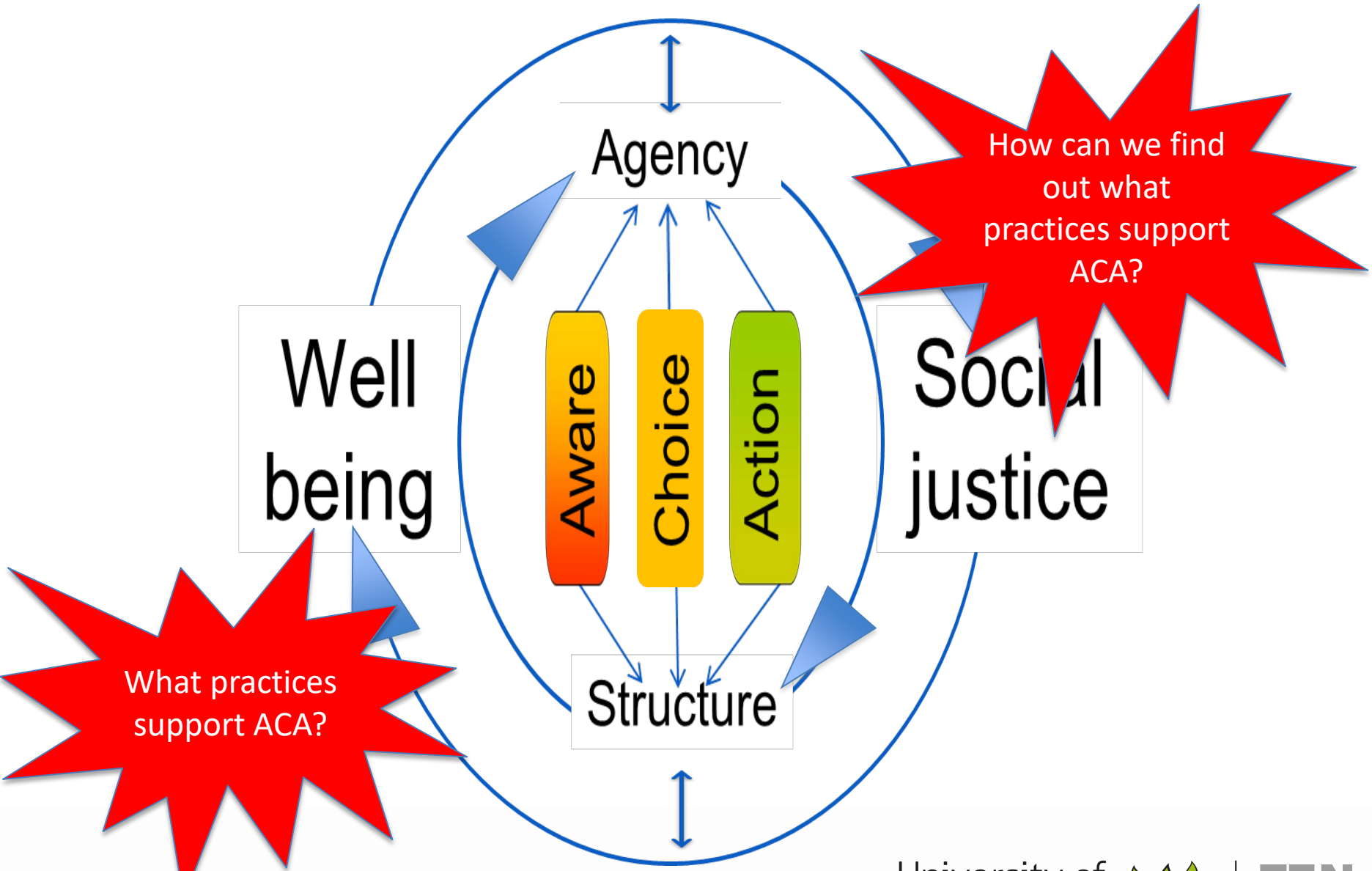
Aaron’s Story

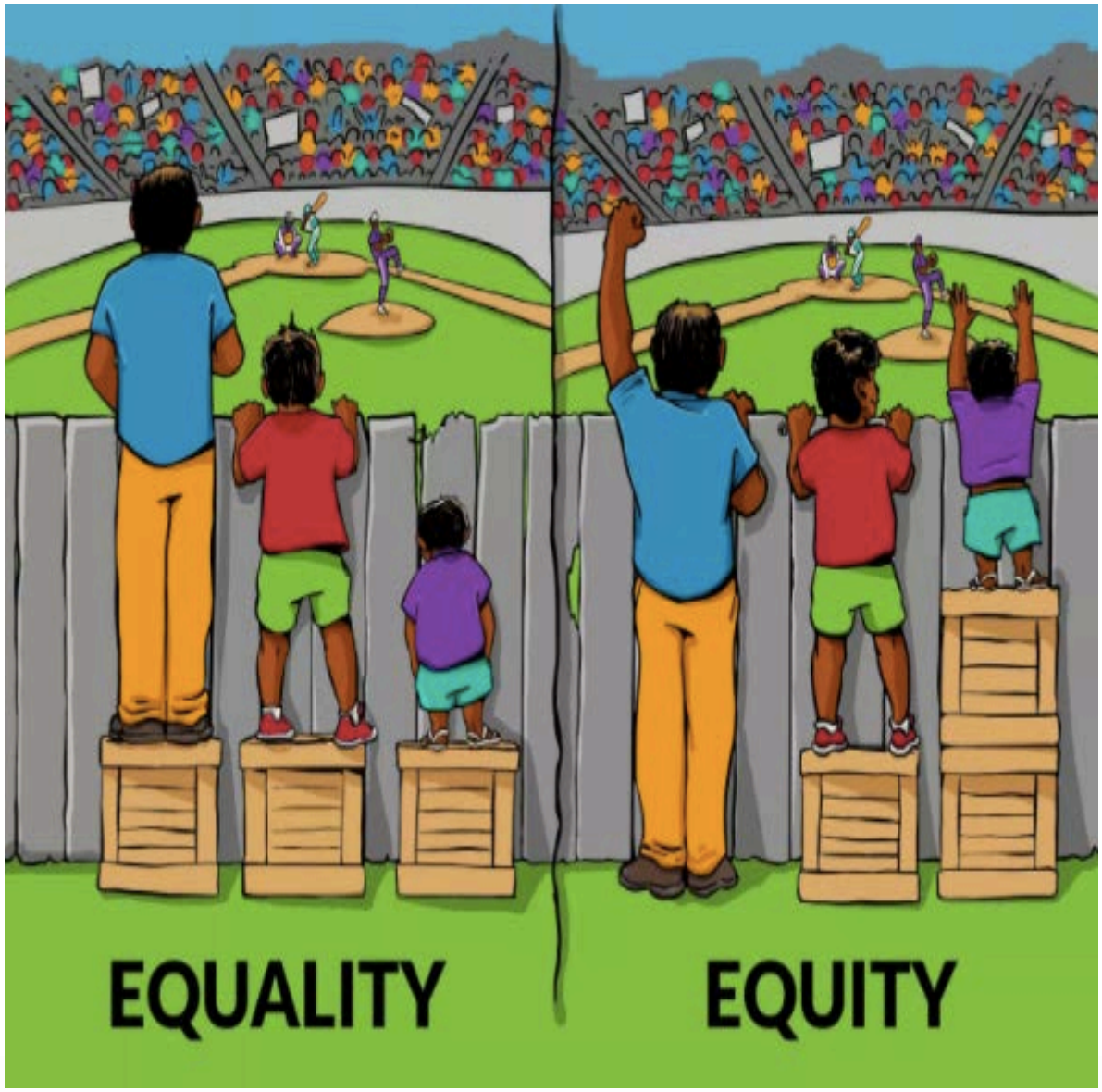

Process of empowerment
Sustain
Transfer
How
Pro-active commitment
Process of self-awareness
Wanting
Realising
Sparking
+ / -
Recycling
Re-active self


Action
Choice
Aware


Agency
Aware
Choice
Action
Structure


Agency
Well being
Aware
Choice
Action
Social justice
Structure


Agency
Well being
Aware
Choice
Action
Social justice
Structure
How can we find out what practices support ACA?
What practices support ACA?


EQUALITY
EQUITY

Examples of inequality in the UK education system

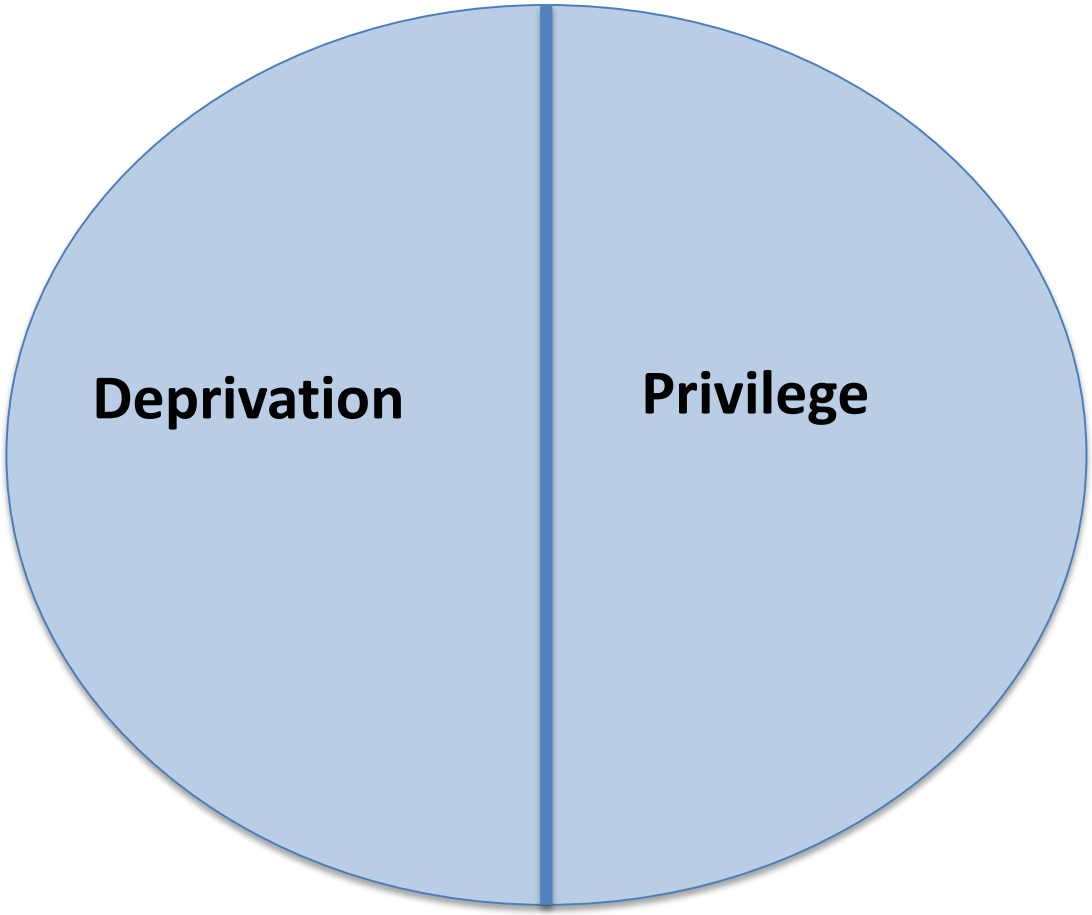
11.2% of all 16-24 years olds are NEET (House of Commons Library, 2018)

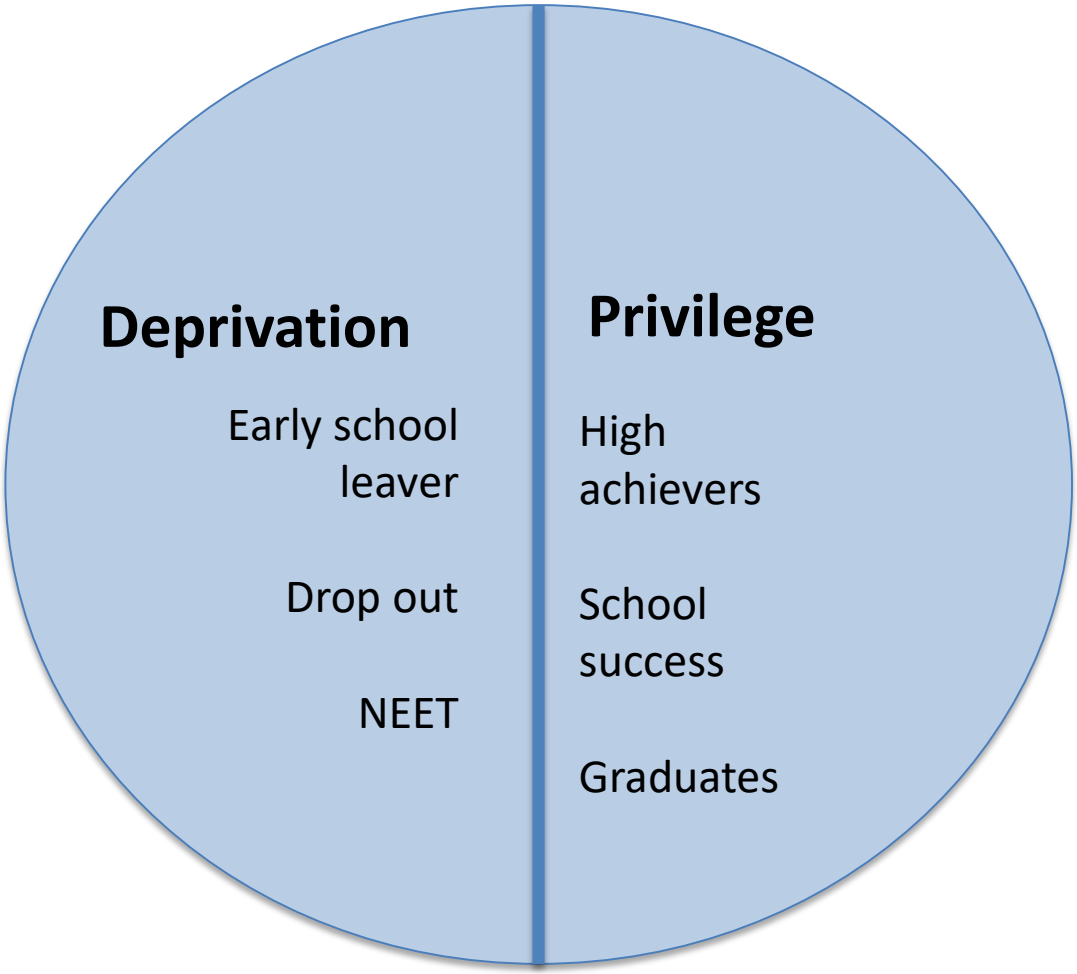
18% of students do not complete upper secondary education and are drop outs /

4.5% of children have absences from school
10% of those miss 10% of school (DfE, 2017)

54% of school pupils report being bullied (UK Annual Bullying Survey, 2017)

10% of children under 16 experience a mental health issue. Only 30% of them receive treatment (NHS England, 2018)


Deprivation
Privilege


Deprivation
Early school leaver
Drop out
NEET
Privilege
High achievers
School success
Graduates

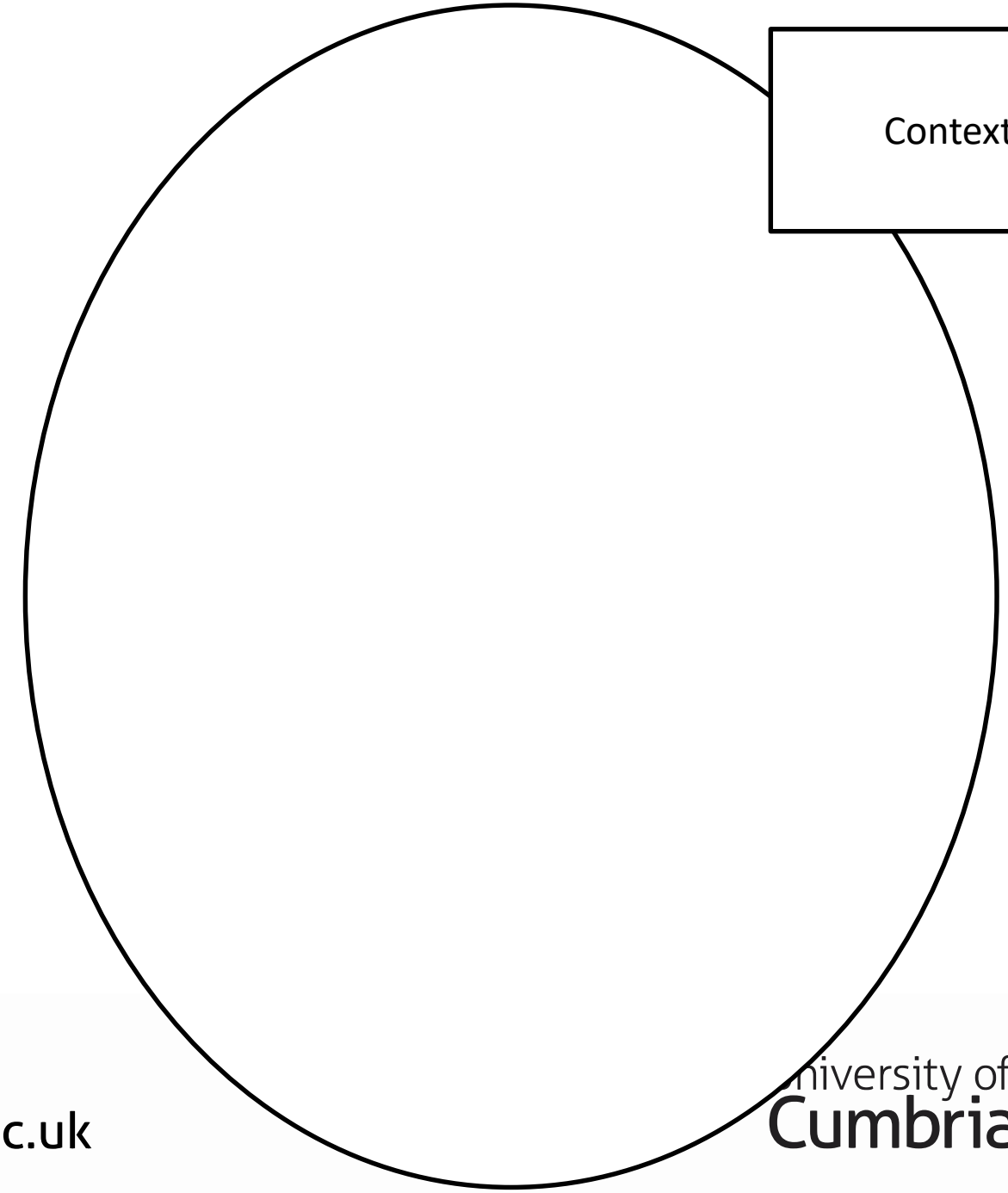
An Equalities Literacy Tool

Understanding ourselves and others in context is vital in order to understand the relative nature of equality and equity.

Lets explore your action researcher identity

Context is king

- Anthropology / sociology / education / youth work perspectives state context matters, we are socio-culturally shaped.
- Inequalities have always existed (Dorling, 2010)
- Social and cultural production and reproduction, through habitus and hegemonic structures (Bourdieu)
- Humans are socially and culturally embedded (Thompson, 1997; Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

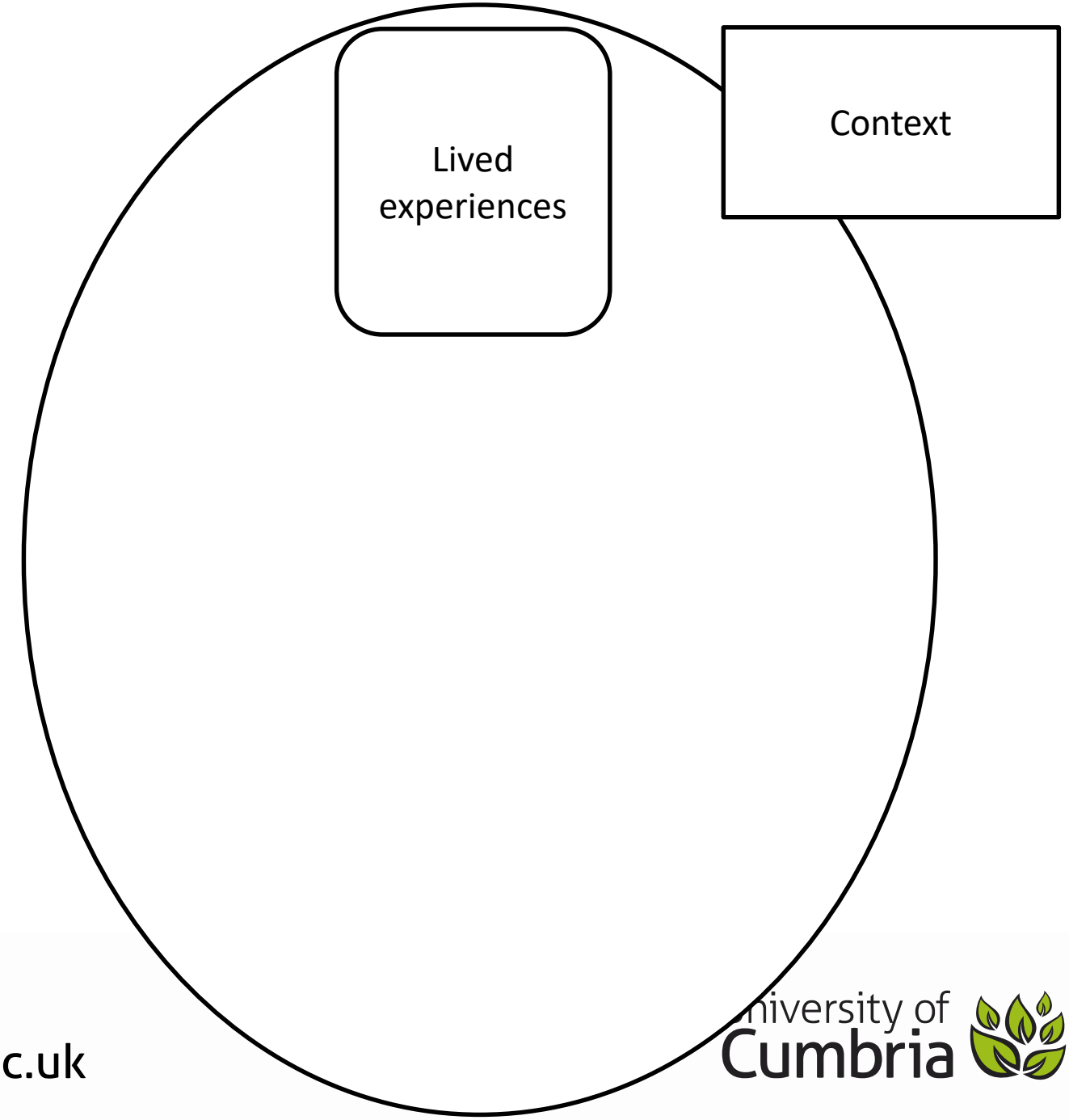

Context

Contextual facts questions

- Where do you work?
- What sort of place?
- What action research do you do?
- Who is it with?
- How large is your action research community?

Lived experiences

- The reality of living in this space may vary as people respond to different circumstances in different ways.
- The lived experience you have may also vary depending on how you think you compare to other people around you.
- This aspect of wellbeing is often summarised as ‘quality of life’ and is a self-perceptual measure of how good your life is (ONS, 2018).

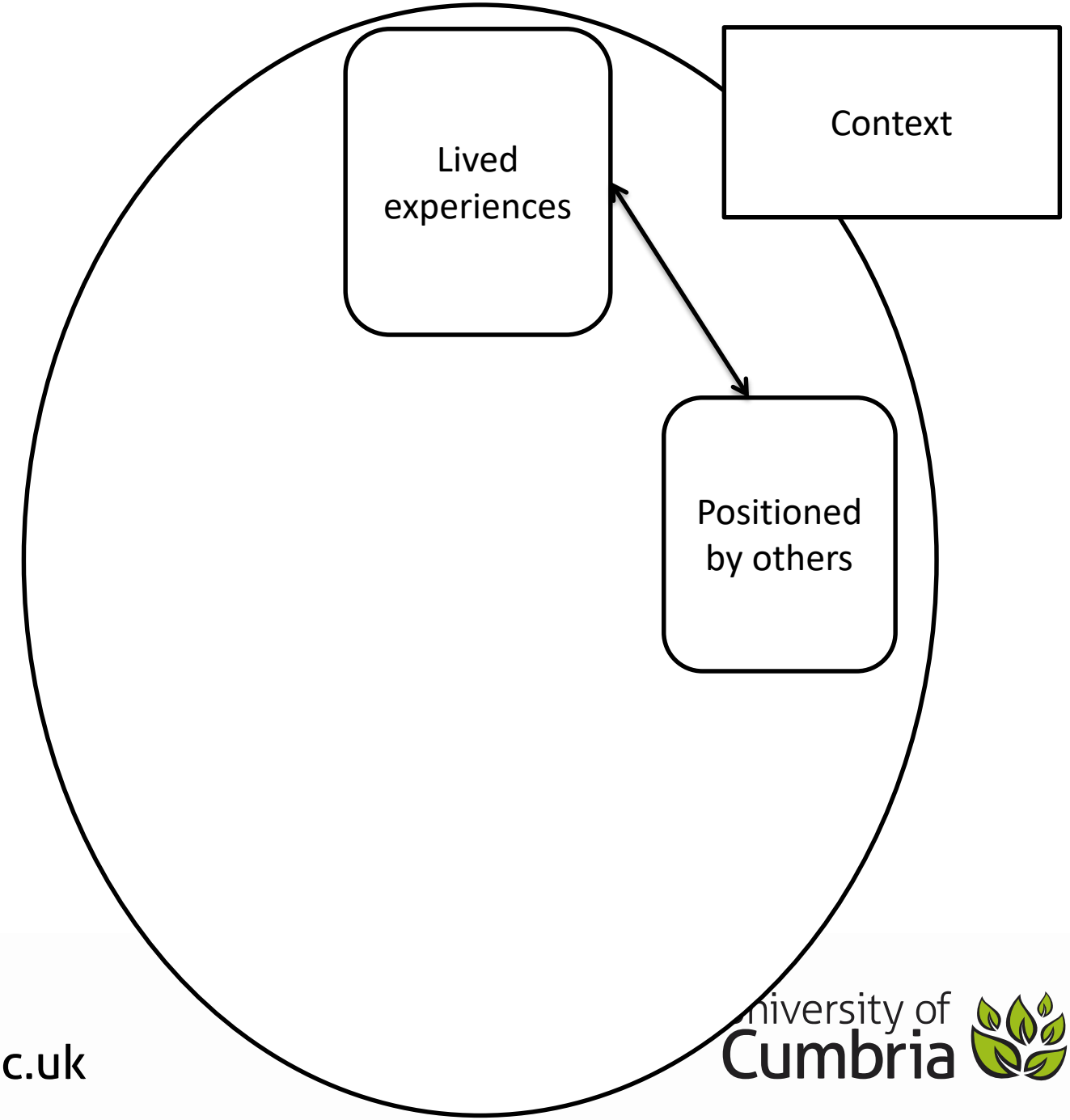

Lived
experiences
Context

Lived experiences questions

- How happy are you as an action researcher?
- What delights you?
- What challenges you?
- What aspects are ‘soul food’?
- What other feelings do you experience when doing action research?

Positioning by others

- People in society position ‘other’ individuals and groups in relation to themselves – it is a psychological defence
- Positions also created by the state, media and society (Jones, 2015; Bourdieu, 1999)
- People then produce, reproduce and protect a given status quo (Dorling, 2010; Fox, Piven and Cloward, 2015)
- It is often hegemonic (Gramsci, 1971; Ledwith, 2005; Wearing, 1998)
- This positioning protects the interests of the haves against the have not’s (Tyler, 2013; Dorling, 2010, Blackman and Rogers, 2017)

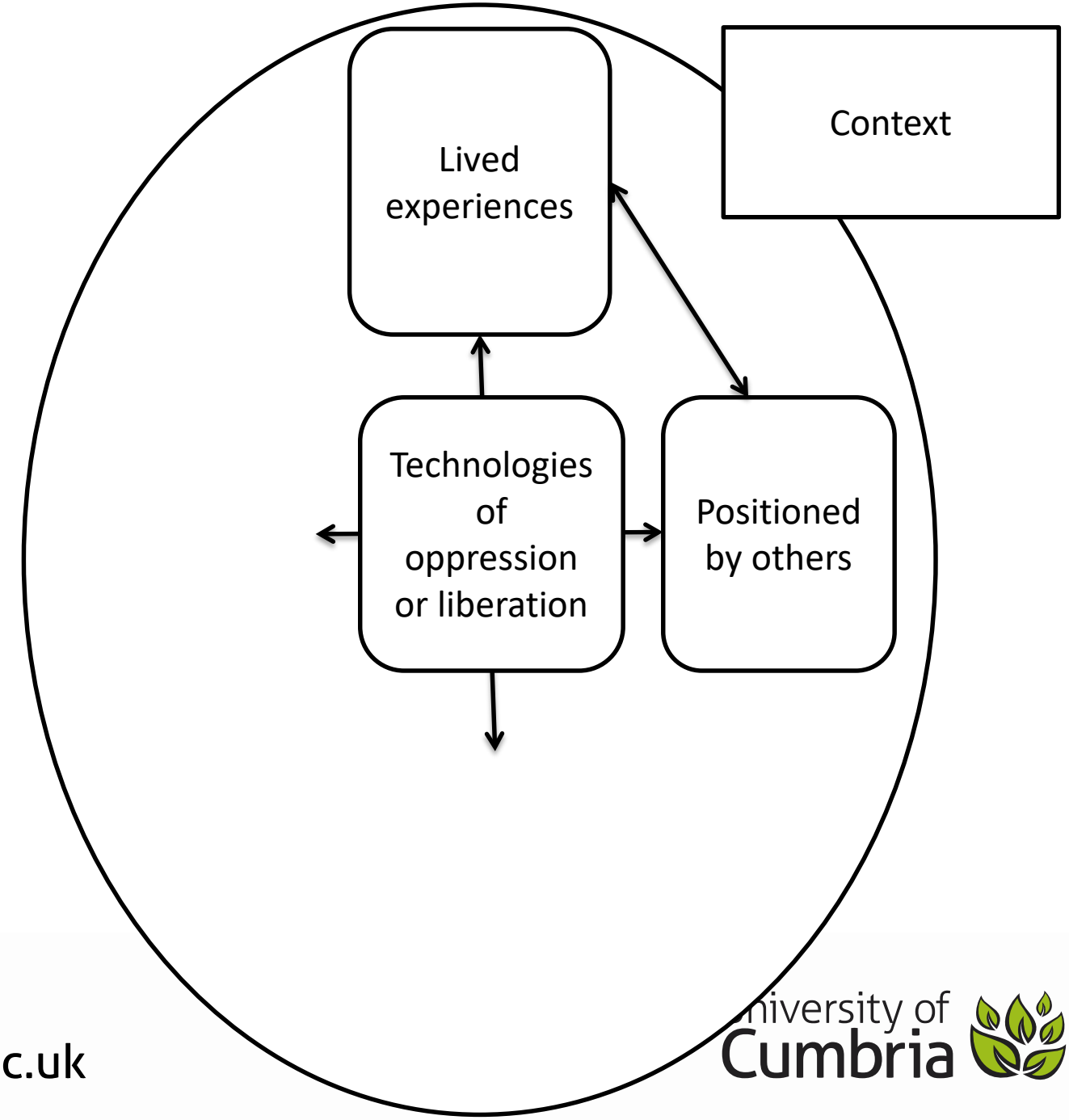

Lived experiences
Context
Positioned by others

Positioning by others questions

- Who supports and critique your work / role?
- How do these people treat you?
- Who treats you as an equal?
- Who looks down on you?
- Who puts you on a pedestal?
- Who makes you feel uncomfortable?
- What do you think other people say about you?
- What labels are you given?
- What stereotypes are applied to you?

Technologies of oppression or liberation

- Stereotyping and labelling (Dorling, 2010)
- Objectification (Bourdieu, 2003)
- Othering (Foucault, 1979; 1982, Lacan, 1988; Lévi-Strauss, 1955; Said, 1994)
- Social abjection (Tyler, 2013)
- Dehumanising, shame, stigma (Nussbaum, 2004l Brown, 2010)
- Willful blindness (Heffernan, 2011)
- Insecurity (Lorey, 2015; Butler, 2006),
- Fear (Furedi, 2005)
- Legislation (Bauman, 1989 and surveillance (Foucault, 1978, 1982) to keep people in their place.

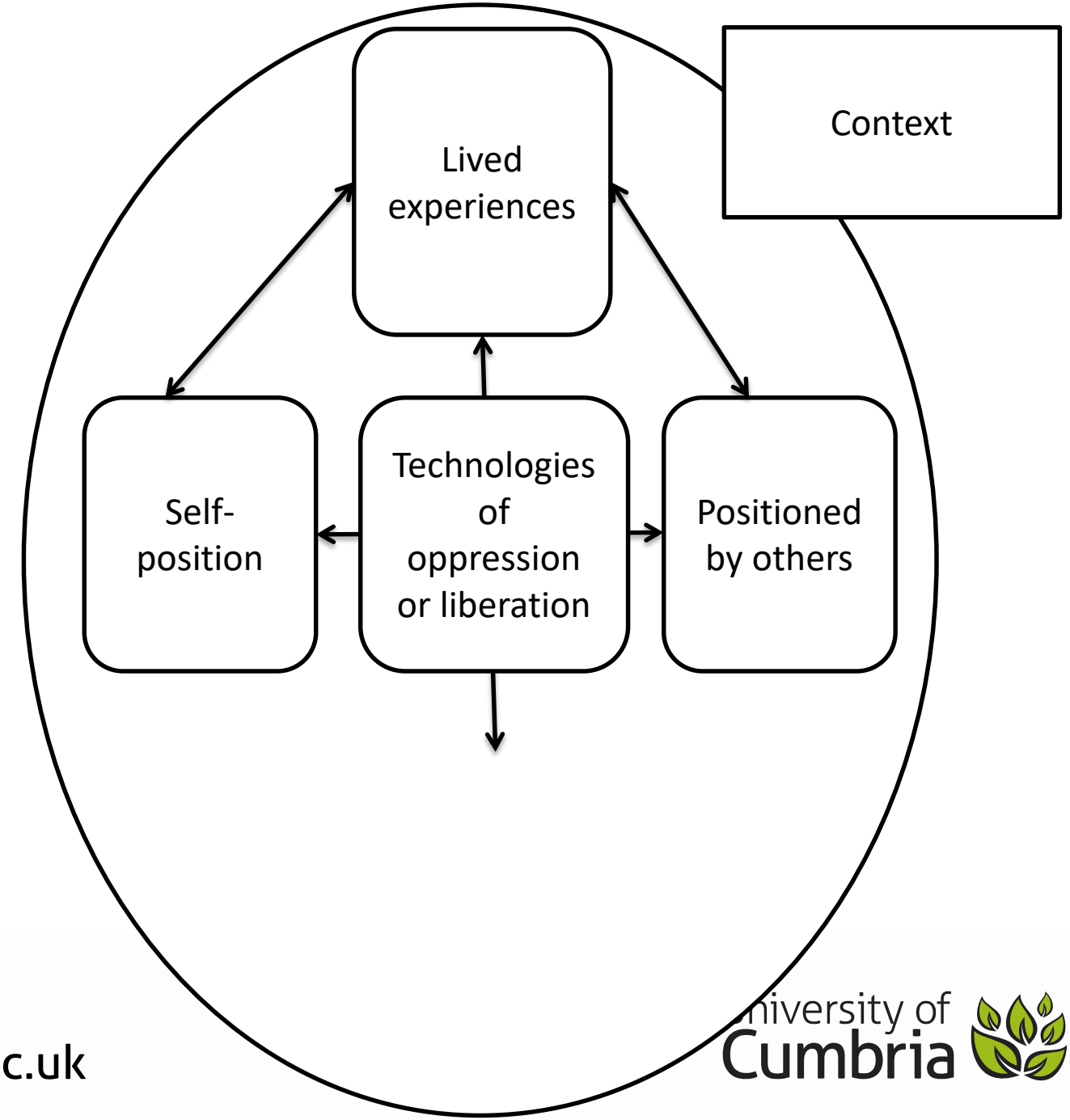

Lived experiences
Context
Technologies of oppression or liberation
Positioned by others

Technologies questions

- How do people put you down?
- How did people make you feel powerful?
- When / why were you last ignored or silenced?
- How did other people make you do what they wanted you to do?
- How do other people make you feel bad?
- What did other researchers / leaders and managers / colleagues say to you?
- How do people treat you as an action researcher and how does that make you feel?
- When have you felt good as an action researcher? What did people do to make you feel good?

Self position

- Status is socially inscribed and self-ascribed
- The ‘have’s’ and ‘have not’s’ the ‘not normals’ or ‘super rich’ adopt positions relative to this framing
- These can be positions of compliance and acceptance, victimhood, rebellion, deviance etcetera.
- This has a major impact on the identity, agency and social mobility then experienced (Cote and Levine, 2002; Lawler, 2008)

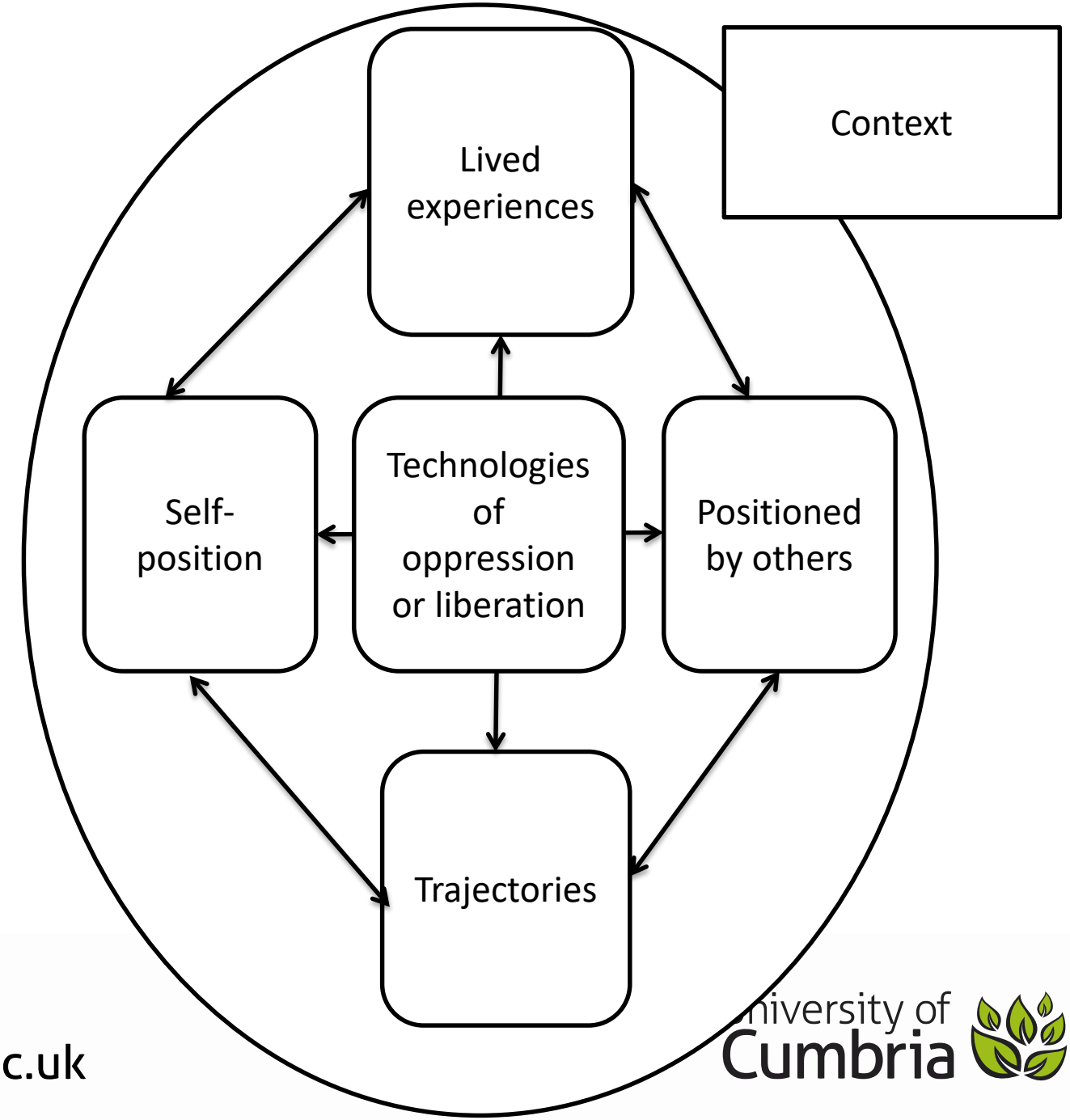

Context
Lived experiences
Self-position
Technologies of oppression or liberation
Positioned by others

Self-position questions

- How do you respond?
- How do you feel about yourself?
- What do you think about yourself?
- What are your self-beliefs?
- What are your critical messages about yourself?
- How do you behave?
- Do you rebel? Act the victim? Comply with what they say?

Trajectory

- Intrapersonal impact of these technologies e.g. low self-esteem, self-efficacy, identity, agency etc. (Bandura, Giddens, Archer)
- Interpersonal impact e.g. low trust, fear, insecure, shame, stigma (Nussbaum, 2004)
- Supporting further self-positioning and further positioning by others in on-going cycles (Bourdieu)
- Nested poor outcomes intergenerationally


Context
Lived experiences
Self-position
Technologies of oppression or liberation
Positioned by others
Trajectories

Trajectory questions

- What impact does all this have?
- Where do you think you are heading as an action researcher?
- Where do you want to be? Is it the same place?
- What could you change to make it different?
- What do you need to do to keep it on track?

The complex locus of in/equalities

- Intersectional (Collins, 2015, bell hooks, 1994, Crenshaw, 1989)
- Intersubjective (Hegel, 1908; Habermas, 1987)
- Constellations (Hart, 2015)
- Matrices of deprivation / oppression / injustice (Collins, 2015; Ledwith, 2005)

Without equalities literacy people:

- Make faulty assumptions / work from biases
- Disempower and disable (Illich, 1971; Le Grand, 2003), assistentialise / rescue (Jefferies, 2011)
- Blame, label and withdraw services (it's their fault mentality)
- Unconsciously reinforce existing power relations and therefore positions of inequality (Bourdieu, 1979)

Next steps for me….

- MaCE Research Project to explore youth narratives of school drop out: https://www.usn.no/english/research/projects/marginalisation-and-co-created-education-mace/
- Established a Practitioner Action Research and Creative Methods Hub at the University of Cumbria www.actionresearchhub.org
- Established a Cumbria and Lancashire Wellbeing Blog that lobbies for social action by raising local issues to national level www.wellbeingandsocialjustice.blog
- Three year research project to understand which practices contribute to ACA – anyone interested?

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