Who "owns" or controls the products of PAR research?

Ownership of the products of PAR research should be negotiated at the outset of any PAR effort. The negotiators should include the outside researcher or scholar and the community (what we call the insiders).

In many instances, the immediate objectives of the PAR researcher and the community may be different. The PAR researcher, who likely comes from academia, is probably hoping to use the research to fulfill certain expectations in the scholarly community critical to his or her advancement. Most often, this involves publishing original research in peer-reviewed journals. The community, by contrast, is most likely trying to solve a pressing problem affecting their lives. These two goals often yield competing—but parallel—PAR research products.

The right of the community to “own” (i.e. be able to shape the content and disseminate it) PAR research products is sometimes limited by the lack of political power they bring to the relationship. The relationships undergirding the PAR process should be based on trust between the parties: the researcher is granted access to the community and the community is granted help from the scholarly world. Each gains something through this interaction. Pre-existing “power relationships” should not be the determinant of who owns or controls the products of PAR research.

In order for the full benefits of PAR to be achieved —and this is what separates PAR from other applied social research approaches—it behooves the researcher to include the community insiders in all the decisions the researcher feels he or she has to make to succeed in the academic world. Academia has a hierarchy and bureaucratic processes that can be unintelligible to outsiders. PAR researchers should make concerted efforts to allocate funding so that representatives of the community can jointly present findings at academic conferences, and (if they want) be included as co-authors of scholarly research.