What is practice research?

• Practice is the methodology
• Practice is a valid mode of research.
• Challenges in accessing practice research outputs.
• Can lead to high quality research outputs

• Practice Research Advisory Group (PRAG) reports:
  https://bl.iro.bl.uk/concern/reports/b51c0f52-9801-49d9-9f00-cca89741091b
Co-production, participatory research, co-creation, co-design

• In the arts (dance), the borders between the research community and professional practice community and audiences are very porous.
• Researchers often (also) identify as artist practitioners
• Relationships can be very productive; built on existing awareness of different working methods and on trust.
• Researchers can have easier access to a particular community or setting, as the researcher is already ‘part of’ that community.
• Closeness means establishing ground rules.
• Expectations need to be clear and transparent: work should be carried out **responsibly and respectfully**.
Working respectfully in participatory research

• Artists/arts organisations and the realities of precarity.
• Artists’ labour needs to be paid for.
• Identify and discuss mutual benefit.
• Mutual benefit may mean learning more about working processes, gaining new skills, new insights, building new audiences.
• Advocacy – making the case to funders and stakeholders.
Participatory research in practice

• Research that is conducted ‘with’ and not ‘on’ people/participants.
• It is qualitative in focus (e.g. participant observation, group discussions, journal/diary notes etc).
• Rooted in the real needs of those who participate and not dictated/determined by the researcher.
• Participants should not be seen as subjects or (worse) ‘objects of study’ but as co-researchers.
• Effective as method when it involves those who are seldom heard or marginalised in other research processes.
• May not arrive at concrete outcomes and recommendations: should not be forced or exaggerated.
• Can be stimulating for everyone – leading to further partnership working and lay the ground for some more extended research
Ethical Matters

• Awareness of individual needs and particularly if working with vulnerable participants, so avoiding ‘extractive’ methods for collecting research data.

• Awareness of difference in economical structures and timeframes.

• Build in flexibility and responsiveness.

• A long-term commitment to a study can be challenging.

• Clarity about where IP lies and what happens to the research.

• Different modes of dissemination.
Dancers: Tanja Erhart and Welly O’Brien
Co-production and participatory research in practice

• Ensure understanding and agreement.
• Make a democratic or ‘safe’ space. Awareness of power relations; organise time and space appropriately.
• Allow the participant to lead the discussions: asking questions that are open-ended
• Rethink modes and methods of user testing, working protocols and settings.
• Acknowledge their lived experience.
• The importance of language.
• Shared decision-making: participants as co-researchers.
• Co-presenting and co-authoring where appropriate.
• Paying them proper (artist) rates.
What the research revealed through the method:

• Traditional design and technology methods do not often consider the lived experience of those who are ‘testing’ equipment etc.

• The research challenged some of the orthodoxies of methods that focus on data capture.

• Reconsidered the role of the prosthesis for those who use them and implications for 3D modelling (and printing).

• Dancers had an opportunity to think about their relationship with their prosthesis in a different way – as a creative partner, expanding their creative processes, and provided some agency in their relationship with prosthetists and other health professionals.

• Normative methods and traditional power structures in the dance/technology interface might need to be challenged and rethought.

• Promotes a greater commitment to diversity in different research environments.


https://candoco.co.uk/work/cuckoo-film/