RESEARCH
FOR ALL

Duncan, S. and Oliver, S. (2017) 'Editorial: Motivations for engagement'.
Research for All, 1 (2), 229–33. DOI https://doi.org/10.18546/RFA.01.2.01

Editorial: Motivations for engagement

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The rich content of our second issue has made us consider why researchers and the people they work with choose to do collaborative research, and if and how their motivations influence the approach they take. There are clearly a range of motivations highlighted by the authors of our papers, and it is impressive to see that, for many, this work is something that they have invested in for a significant amount of time. However, it is also clear that this work is full of tensions and ambiguities, and that collaborating with others takes time, energy and patience. Most particularly it can challenge researchers' assumptions about how research is done. The work reflected in the pages of the journal suggest that there are really strong motivations encouraging people to work in this way – not just once, but over a lifetime.

In 2009, the UK Department of Business Innovation and Skills set up the Science for All expert group to help improve public engagement with science. In 2010, the group published a report that offered insights into why UK scientists engaged with the public. The motivations were varied, including to:

- inspire learning
- develop researchers' skills
- be ethical, accountable and transparent
- make the world a better place
- create a more efficient, dynamic and sustainable economy
- enhance social cohesion and democratic participation
- increase the quality and impact of research
- win support for science.

These motivations touched at the heart of why scientists thought engaging with the public was important and led them to engage in a variety of ways: from outreach in schools to inspire the next generation of researchers, to consultations with patients to inform the directions of medical research; from citizen science where members of the public work alongside researchers to gather and interpret data, to science busking encouraging informal conversations with the public about research.

This work looked at motivations of scientists based in the UK, but they resonate with researchers in other countries too. For example, in March 2017 the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) worked with scientists in China, exploring why they engaged with the public, and if and how their motivations were similar or different to those expressed in the UK. Many of the motivations were shared across the two contexts, but there were also differences. One strong motivation for the Chinese scientists was the need to raise scientific literacy and to support engagement in informed debate around new areas of science to encourage people to embrace new ideas and new technologies. This is reminiscent of the movement for public understanding of science in the UK in the 1980s. There was also a strong sense that it was the right thing to do – that publicly funded science should be useful to everyone.

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While the Science for All report looked specifically at researchers' motivations to engage with the public in all its diverse forms, it is also interesting to consider whether we have any insights as to why researchers and communities work together on research projects in more collaborative ways. Given the commitment shown by all those involved in collaborative research projects, it is worth reflecting on what drives this commitment, and how these motivations influence the nature of the projects being undertaken.

During the past eight years, the NCCPE has had the privilege of meeting and working with a host of community-based organizations working with universities both in the UK and internationally, and has been instrumental in the set-up of the UK Community Partner Network (NCCPE, 2017). The NCCPE has noticed and explored the complementary reasons for why community organizations work with researchers. These include: enhancing skills; building capacity; sharing ideas, insights and experiences; confidence-building; support for evaluation, including offering credible evidence of the value of the work of community organizations; access to resources including research, rooms and people; and the opportunity to reflect critically in their own work.

In 2014, the NCCPE ran the Engaged Futures project that brought people from inside and outside of higher education together to consider what an engaged university might look like in 2025 (Wilson *et al*., 2014). Again, motivations came up as a critical part of the engagement landscape – with those inside and outside of higher education sharing their ideas of why engagement matters. Drawing on work by Fiorino (1989) and Stirling (2008) on stakeholder engagement, the NCCPE considered potential imperatives for engagement, including:

- substantive imperatives – where engagement is undertaken because non-experts see problems, issues and solutions that experts may miss, thereby increasing the quality of the work being done
- normative imperatives – which inspire engagement because it is the right thing to do, partly because research is publicly funded and partly because it is important for those affected by the research to have influence.

During the Engaged Futures consultation, the NCCPE found that:

> Many of the people we spoke to support a normative view of engagement work, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because a normative rationale for engagement work takes universities into new and dynamic places: that universities are not only more accountable to the public, but also integral and integrated within a vibrant democracy, economy and society.
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> (Wilson *et al*., 2014: 7)

Of those arguing that normative imperatives should drive engagement, many were community organizations, highlighting their views that publicly funded institutions needed to share their privilege, insights and resources to benefit society. However, many community organizations also argued that collaborative research matters as it draws on the insights, perspectives and value of community-based expertise – that is on substantive imperatives.

While these two imperatives provide the start of a framework for understanding why community organizations and academics work together, there are clearly other factors. A third important imperative might be described as instrumental, a desire to see research findings utilized in effective ways.

These three motivations together seem to be held by both researchers and community organizations in this issue of *Research for All*. Rasool, for example, reflects on four years of collaborative research as a community researcher on the Imagine project. She makes a strong case for the value of involving community partners, drawing on substantive imperatives to emphasize the critical need to create opportunities for new people to be involved in research in ways that enhance them as individuals and that lead to good-quality research informed by those who have not had the opportunity to participate before.

Hall and Tandon's lives have been shaped by the belief that community-based participatory research is fundamental to ensuring that research is informed and used by those it most affects. Their conversation piece reflects on a long-term commitment to the idea that defaulting to the dominant way of validating and understanding knowledge silences voices, expertise, wisdom and insights that the world needs. They campaign for universities to change their paradigm, and to create space for new ways of building and using knowledge. Drawing on both substantive and normative perspectives, they argue that it is the right thing to do, but also that it is a critically important thing if we are to address the challenges we collectively face.

Inspired by community practices in Africa, Owusu *et al*. introduce the idea of generating 'breakthough environments', which seek to subvert the dominance of academic research, recognizing instead the importance of creating spaces where all those with expertise and experience can share their insights. Building on the notion that everyone involved needs to have the option to contribute their insights and take action relevant to them, their project describes the value of this type of approach in creating safe places to learn, share and change. As with Hall and Tandon, there are suggestions that both normative and substantive imperatives animate this work.

Instrumental motivations play a role for some of our contributors who have a keen desire to see research make a difference. The challenge of translating research outputs into impact is picked up by Barugahara and Harber, who share their work on the DRUSSA project in Uganda. By looking at the challenge of sharing research with policymakers, the authors offer up insights on how to make this work in practice, and encourage us to recognize the need for intermediaries to help translate between different cultures, contexts and professions. Brown offers an approach for encouraging schoolteachers to utilize research evidence in their practice. Research learning communities are groups that provide a focal point for sharing learning and insight, and for inspiring new ways of working. They offer teachers the opportunity to put new ideas into practice, and to reflect on the value to them and their students.

In addition to the three imperatives described above is another key motivation – the idea that engagement may prove a critical methodological approach to sourcing data for research. Starting from small beginnings, Jordan used social media tools to open a conversation about her work and to encourage people to contribute to it. She provides practical guidance to others who are keen to explore the potential for digital engagement. Quite clearly, the engagement in this case has a substantive imperative in that it enriches her research – but without it she would not have been able to undertake the research at all.

Finally, when reflecting on motivations, it is helpful to have an article written by research collaborators – Allan, Davis-Steel and Dunn – who share their views about a year-long collaborative research project that co-produced a transition programme for teenagers leaving mental-health services. Allan, as Head of Patient and Parent Involvement in an NHS Foundation Trust, reflects on instrumental motivations, how she wanted to see improved transitions for young people and her wish for external evidence of appropriate ways to address the challenges of transitioning to adult services. Davis-Steel and Fran Dunn, as young participant–researchers, reflect on the benefits of participating in the research and emphasize how, by being involved in the process rather than as 'subjects' of the research, they felt they were contributing to improving transition services. While Allan concludes that there are significant challenges to these ways of working, she maintains that the effort is definitely worth it. Project leader Valerie Dunn endorses this view in a paper co-written with Tom Mellor that explains how Allan and her co-authors were involved and provides details of allied projects where young care leavers and users of mental health services made films that reflected their experiences and offered insights to their peers. In a third piece on this subject, Dunn describes how developing new ways of working with young people with mental health problems was inspired by her rather one-sided encounter with a 17-year-old whose clinical depression had become, from his perspective, normal.

That research is a social endeavour is reflected in the remaining contributions to this issue of *Research for All*. Bevan Jones and his colleagues recount how communicating psychiatric research and practice through visual art has enabled exploration of not only medical and scientific themes, but also the wider social, cultural and ethical ramifications of this work. Krogh and Nielsen conceptualize interactive research as research with and about society and provide a set of systematic reflections on how to manage opposing pressures, tensions and dilemmas in interactive research projects.

Two articles explore how care for terminology is crucial if research is to be inclusive. Clancy describes how a group of civil society practitioners contested ideas that have become ideologically dominant through reflection on a number of 'keywords' that underpin their work. Meanwhile, Stewart *et al*. report on qualitative data collected over 15 years in South Africa, which shows that divisive terminology profiling people and job titles continues to set the producers of evidence against the end users of that knowledge and so undermines the premise that research is for all. They advocate the use of more inclusive language so that decision-making is true to the premise that research is for all.

Finally, this issue includes two book reviews: Henk Mulder on *Creative Research Communication: Theory and practice* by Claire Wilkinson and Emma Weitkamp, which explores the practical aspects of research communication for scholars and postgraduate students; and Charlotte Thorley on *Engaged Research and Practice: Higher education and the pursuit of the public good* edited by Betty Overton, Penny A. Pasque and John C. Brukhardt, which aims to inspire effective practice in engaged research.

In issue 1.1 of the journal, we introduced the metaphor of a map to describe the landscape of the journal – offering up the idea of different territories, cultures, languages and scales of engagement. Motivations may be shared across all territories of the map, but there will also be important differences about why we choose to work in these ways. Whatever your motivations for getting involved, we hope, like the authors of our articles, that you will want to commit to more engaged ways of working now and in the future, and that you will share your experiences in the pages of this journal.

Acknowledgements

Research for All is a collaborative project that relies on a range of associate editors with experience of engaged research in a variety of contexts. The associate editors who advised us on the content for this issue of the journal are:

- Cath Chamberlain – *Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, UK*
- Ceri Davies – *University of Brighton, UK*
- Janet Jull – *University of Ottawa, Canada*
- Sarah Lloyd – *University of Hertfordshire, UK*
- Nick Mahony – *Open University, UK*
- Paul Manners – *NCCPE, UK*
- Henk Mulder – *University of Groningen, The Netherlands*
- Ruth Stewart – *University of Johannesburg, South Africa*
- Allison Tong – *University of Sydney, Australia*
- Crystal Tremblay – *University of Victoria, Canada*

We extend our thanks to them and to the expert reviewers – two for each contribution – who helped us guide authors towards their final drafts.

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