

Varför, med vem, när och hur mycket? Samverkan mellan forskare och aktörer utanför akademien inom området äldre och åldrande

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ABSTRACT

Den åldrande befolkningen har identifierats som en samhällsutmaning, och en tydlig utveckling inom forskning om sådana utmaningar är krav om medverkan från patientgrupper, brukarorganisationer och andra aktörer utanför akademien. *Syftet* med artikeln är att redovisa några centrala och internationellt etablerade traditioner och ramverk för samverkan mellan forskare och aktörer utanför akademien, samt att föreslå ett "verktyg" för att identifiera centrala frågor och värdera sådan samverkan. Verktöget ramar in av komponenterna *syfte, aktör, process* och *omfattning (SAPO)*, eller enklare uttryckt genom frågorna: *varför, med vem, när* och *hur mycket*? Med hjälp av verktöget kan både forskare och aktörer utanför akademien föra mer systematiska och kritiskt värderande resonemang om samverkan, vilket i sin tur kan leda till mer effektiva arbetsformer och nyttiggörande av resultat från det mångfacetterade forskningsområde som rör den åldrande befolkningen.

Title: Scrutinizing the Collaboration Criterion in Research: How Do Policy Ambitions Play Out in Proposals and Assessments?

To be submitted within short

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Abstract

Background: Based on a commission by a Swedish Research Council (Forte), which has high ambitions to strengthen the collaboration between academia and society, this study aimed to scrutinize how this criterion was operationalized in research proposals and related assessments.

Method: Starting out deductively based on literature and a model describing forms of collaboration, a content analysis of 381 proposals was used to identify patterns and categories in text fields describing collaboration, and in related assessments. Comparisons were made between granted and rejected proposals. Preliminary findings were discussed in a workshop with 34 researchers representing granted proposals in the material, followed by further analysis. **Results:** The applicants had made diverse interpretations of the collaboration. Collaboration overlapped with other sections in the proposals. Many concepts for methodological starting points were used but none of them frequently, and scarce attention to theoretical underpinnings was observed. **Conclusions:** There is a need to develop theoretical awareness and conceptual clarity regarding concepts such as collaboration, societal relevance, and dissemination in the context of research proposals. Separating these politically loaded concepts in guidelines for applicants contradicts the very notion of collaboration. In the context studied, collaboration with non-academic partners does not appear to be crucial for funding.

Keywords: User Involvement; Research Impact; Knowledge Translation; Research Policy; Societal Relevance; Knowledge Dissemination

Collaboration in proposals and assessments in ageing research

- A way of legitimation or a quest for a collaborology¹?

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¹ In this article, collaborology refers to the codification of collaboration in research, not to be confused with concepts coined by Sam Hahn or Bartel Nickel.

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Abstract

Issues dealt with in ageing research are both epistemologically complex and politically contentious. We have used the concept of Mode-2 as a proxy for tendencies characterizing current research policy within ageing research. By using the metaphor of ‘a travelling idea’, we have followed these tendencies on their journey into 17 research proposals on ageing and their assessments in Sweden in 2016. We considered collaboration as the modus operandi of Mode-2. Thus, we analyzed how plans for collaboration were described in the material. The result is that only three proposals reflected Mode-2. Although this mindset was clearly present in the steering documents, it was almost eviscerated in the majority of proposals and assessments. We suggest that one reason for this fade impact could be that researchers in their roles as both applicants and evaluators deliberately resist what they perceive as obligations imposed from external actors trying to restrict academic freedom. Another reason could be that as long as there is no established way of describing collaboration, researchers will struggle to invent their own tentative versions. In line with the latter explanation, the codification of collaboration; that is *a collaborology*, would create conditions for ideas to travel.

Keywords: Mode-2, travelling ideas, collaborative research, research funding