Doing ageing research as a vocation

When third task-activities, education, contract work and joint action become participation

"With the focus on higher education, there is also an ultimate link between science and education and their institutional roles in society to be explored beforehand." (Jantsch 1972)

Introduction

During the first two decades of the 21st century policy-makers and university managers across Europe have put emphasis on collaboration between universities and actors outside academia (AOAs). A general turn towards participatory mechanisms in European institutions embeds this 'participatory imperative' (Saurugger 2010) and anchors it in on an EU-level. As a reflection, social impact and collaboration are declared leading principles in European research initiatives, such as EU Research and Innovation program Horizon 2020. On a national level, the partipatory turn is clearly present in Swedish research policy, such as the Swedish Government bill (2016/17:50) on research with the telling title *Knowledge in collaboration – for the challenges of society and strengthened competitiveness* as well in the recent one entitled *Research, freedom, future – knowledge and Innovation for Sweden* (2020/21:60).

While this policy principle is visible in research policy on different levels, the discourses behind are shifting and sometimes contradictory. A recent study on how public participation was described in research policies of the European Commission 1998-2019 found two distinct discourses – public participation *as deliberation* and public participation *as production* (Macq, Tancoigne, and Strasser 2020). Through its career in the institutions, public participation as a concept has mostly been reframed so as to fit with the fostering of innovation for the sake of economic growth, the resolution of the so-called 'Grand Challenges', or the ideal of 'Responsible Research and Innovation' (ibid). What about the researchers own attitudes towards engagement with actors outside academia? Lack of time has been put forward as an obstacle (Besley et al. 2018) and one Swedish study showed that nine out of ten researchers were positive to communicating with actors outside academia and that half of the 3699 surveyed Swedish researchers would like to spend more time on it than today (Vetenskapsrådet 2019). However, surveys do not tell anything about the nature of the communication. Even when research communication goes beyond a traditional deficit model of knowledge, where the AOA is not only a receiver but a collaborating partner, researchers still seem reluctant to share power

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and control over the research process with the public (Meriluoto 2018; Boaz, Biri, and McKevitt 2016).

Though universities have been founded on two sets of activities: teaching and research, universities have always made contributions in the wider society. These activities are concerned with the generation, use, application and exploitation of knowledge and other university capabilities outside academic environments (Molas-Gallart et al. 2002). These interactions between universities and the rest of society are sometimes labelled *the third task* or the third mission. The third task has also been described as equivocal; a multidisciplinary, complex, evolving phenomenon linked to the social and economic mission of duties of universities (Compagnucci and Spigarelli 2020). This division between 'social' and 'economic' relates to the above distinction between 'deliberation' and 'production' and reverberates in the title of the referred Swedish Government bill's 'the challenges of society' and 'competitiveness'. In Sweden, the Higher Education Law of 1977 stipulated that the university had to disseminate knowledge about research and development work (Hetland, Kasperowski, and Nielsen 2020). Despite the fact that the third task has been mandatory for Swedish researchers for more than 40 years, the standard tale is that Swedish researchers do not engage in it (ibid.).

The urge for collaboration, user participation and social impact has been salient not least when the issues addressed are so called grand challenges (Kuhlmann and Rip 2018; Ulnicane 2016). The UN[1] has notified that population ageing is to become one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society. FUTURAGE was a two year research project that outlined a European agenda for ageing research clearly influenced by the participatory imperative. The main output from the project was a road Map for European ageing research (Walker 2011). The road map described how a range of different non-academic actors were involved in the identification of research priorities. 'User involvement' and 'emphasis on collaborative research knowledge exchange' were major priorities (ibid).

The empirical material accounted for in this article consist of grant proposals, mid reports and interviews. The setting is contemporary Swedish ageing research. While social impact is framed as a goal in research policy, collaboration and participation are means to achieve this goal (cf. Jacob & Jabrane 2018, Hultqvist et al 2021). However, the enactment of collaboration and participation remains partial and leaves large room for manoeuvre for the actors to play their

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[1] See for example Ageing | United Nations, retrieved 2021-03-01

roles (Saurugger 2010). Collaboration and participation are relational concepts. In order to grasp their meanings in a specific context, we need to 'situate the subject' by reflecting on specific questions and concrete actions. What does it mean to be a researcher in the field of ageing researchers in contemporary Sweden? How do researchers describe their own role in relation to their visions and missions? How does this role interconnect with other roles i.e. that of non-academic actors with vested interests in societal challenges having to do with ageing? As a consequence, the focus of this article is the enactment, actions taken as collaboration and participation. At the center are the roles played by researchers and (though to a minor extent) actors outside academia (AOAs). Whereas there is an abundance of literature schematically prescribing how to conduct collaborative research in order to achieve social impact[2] – Arnstein's *Ladder of participation* (1969) is probably the most referred example – less is known about the concrete enactment in a given context. Thus, the research questions posed were:

- What are the motives for participation and collaboration?
- What kind of activities are described as participation and collaboration?
- How are these activities linked to social impact?

Scholars within the field of aging research have argued in line with the participatory turn during the last two decades; the expected changes in the needs and preferences associated with demographic ageing require institutional mechanisms that enable older citizens to express their views during all stages of the policy-making process – from the design of public policies to the delivery of services on the ground (Corrado et al. 2020; Iwarsson et al. 2019; Walker 2018). On the face of this, it is surprising how little we actually know about the civic engagement of older people, compared to what we know about the engagement among young people (Moreira and Barslund 2019). A growing number of health and social care studies are involving older people as co-researchers cf (Blair and Minkler 2009; Seifert et al. 2019; Shura, Siders, and Dannefer 2011), though the development of involvement of older people in research has been slower than that with many other groups (Littlechild, Tanner, and Hall 2015).

There are established indicators for measuring scientific impact[3], like citations scores. For social impact such indicators do not exist (Frodeman and Parker 2009; Muhonen, Benneworth, and Olmos-Peñuela 2020; Gunn and Mintrom 2017). In an attempt to overcome this lack, the

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[2] For overviews, literature reviews and best practices concerning collaborative/participatory research on health and social issues see (Bammer 2019; Staniszewska et al. 2018; Shippee et al. 2015; Spears Johnson, Kraemer Diaz, and Arcury 2016)

[3] Though these indicators do not work effectively for research in all disciplines cf. (Bouter 2010)

notion of *productive interaction* has been introduced (Spaapen and Van Drooge 2011). Here, productive is not understood as affiliated to economic growth, but to its' original sense; the action of making from components in order to create something new, yielding results. With an approach to evaluation where learning is the prime concern instead of judging, productive interactions suggest that what should be in focus is the interaction between researchers and AOAs (ibid.). This article uses this approach by focusing on the driving-forces behind and actual activities called participation and collaboration foreseen as roads to social impact.

Doing research as a vocation

In 1919, Max Weber was one of the first to shape the agenda for the social studies of science in his seminal lecture "Science as a Vocation"[4]. Historically, he belongs to the first generation of self-consciously modern thinkers who took their point of departure from the Darwinian and Nietzschean challenge to the Enlightment outlook on nature and humanity (Kim 2020) p. 143. Weber elaborated the Kantian line, proclaiming the disenchantment of the world (Kasavin 2020) p. 102, claiming that not only the world around, but the scientist himself must be disenchanted (Antonovskiy and Barash 2020) p. 123. This self-reflective exhortation resonances in Michael Burawoy's suggestion made in the beginning of the 21 century (2005:285) that we 'should apply sociology to ourselves, to become more conscious of the global forces' that are driving our research 'so that we may channel them rather than be channeled by them'. Despite some remnants from a bygone era – as for example the presumption that the prospective scholar is a 'young man' (Weber 1951) taking for granted that aspiring researchers could be neither female nor old – the lecture has kept and on keeps inspiring thought on the role of academia in society cf. (Boswell, Corbett, and Havercroft 2020; Hackett 1990; Erickson 2002; Antonovskiy and Barash 2020).

I have primarily made use of Weber's ideas presented in "Science as a Vocation" as follows: First, I interpreted the accounts given in the grant proposals, mid-reports and during the interviews as descriptions of *paid work*. Embedded in the word "vocation", as in the German "Beruf", is the assumption that this specific kind of paid work implies *a mission*, a personal engagement. Second, Weber in his lecture, defined the communicative boundaries of science

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[4] I have read the German text "Wissenschaft als Beruf" (Weber 1951). Translated into English, already the title indicates problems of meaning having to with translation since the term 'Wissenschaft' has a much broader meaning than the English word 'science'. Because of misunderstandings due to translation the text has often been read as relevant only for the natural sciences, while Weber sought to make generalizations about academic work as a whole; i.e. 'Wissenschaft' (Erickson 2002:34)

through the medium of *truth* in its interface with *values* which socializes the scientific community. All judgments are either truth-based or value-based (Antonovskiy and Barash 2020). To which of the two should the judgements that distinguishes them be attributed? According to Weber, the answer to the question is: both. This answer cancels the rigid boundary between science and society. Differently put, the inherent value of knowledge is meaningless until we correlate it with other goals of scientific interest in society (ibid). Collaborative research, user participation and social impact do all belong to this interface where the virtues of academia, manifest in the scientific search for truth meet the real world, where norms and values shapes the organization of society.

Methodology

The methodology undertaken was inspired by Weber's idea that doing research as a vocation should be subject to investigation and by Burawoy's call for collective introspection for researchers, in order to better understand and be able to channel those forces that are currently steering research. The participatory imperative, the political impetus to conduct research as collaboration was in focus in the analysis of the material. I have borrowed from Jay Lemke (2005) the notion of 'social voice', stressing that when we speak, we speak with the voices of our communities and that matters of meaning and matters of social relationships are so interdependent that we must understand both to understand either (ibid. p. 1). To the extent that we have individual voices, we fashion them out of the social voices already available to us, appropriating the words of others to speak a word of our own (Lemke 2005) pp. 24-25). The material scrutinized in this article stems from a research call made by the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (FORTE) in 2016. The voices I listened to were both expressed as texts, grant proposals and mid-term reports, and as talk, interviews.

Material

17 out of 109 approved grant proposals were selected on the premises that they represented ageing research[5]. I also collected the mid-reports sent to FORTE. The mid-reports were either filled out in pre-printed forms or freely formulated texts with the purpose of informing the funder about the state of the art in the running program. These documents only existed for programs, not for projects. I contacted the 17 PIs via email for an interview. Six PIs responded positively and interviews was set-up and carried out. From 8 of them I did not hear anything.

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[5] Ageing research is broadly defined in the article, as research from different disciplines considering aspects of either old age (as for example medical research on and ill-health) or of the process of ageing (as for example demographic research investigating the effects of an ageing population on society).

One PI answered that she was now retired. One requested further information concerning the study, including a confirmation e-mail from the PI of the research program I was part of, but did not return after having had so. One let me know that the money granted was never accepted, thus this particular research program had not been realized. In a second round I emailed and reminded the PIs who had not answered my first invitation. This second round did not lead to a higher response-rate. At the end, six out of the 17 invited PIs, participated in an interview. In terms of coding and theming, mid-reports and the interviews were scrutinized in the same way. Hence, the core material for the analysis consisted of interviews conducted via Zoom with primal investigators (PI) and with actors outside academia (AOA) involved in research. The grant proposals built the base for the selection of interviewees and provided me with ideologically and epistemological statements on behalf of the PIs. In the grant proposals the PIs expressed what they planned to do, why and how these plans related to the criteria set-up in the call. The mid-reports complemented this information and gave some information about the ongoing processes.

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The interviews

The interviews with PIs can be conceptualized as 'expert interviews' (Mikecz 2012; Quaresma and Villalobos 2019), since the interviewees represented a prominent group of scholars, almost everyone holding a professor's title, granted research funding in tough competition[6]. However, in relation to the Nobel laureates interviewed in the classical study by Harriet Zuckerman (1972), this group is not an ultra-elite but rather a local elite in Sweden within a limited research field that is ageing research. In contrast to the scattered ultra-elite where only a few were in direct contact with one another (Zuckerman 1972:161), contacts between persons in the local elite of ageing researchers in Sweden were common. The inverted dynamic that I experienced during the interviews, where the prototypical power relations were turned upside down and the interviewee was clearly the one who was in possess of exclusive knowledge was in line with methodological descriptions of expert interviews. Actually, I could use my own quite short experience within the field of ageing researcher to prime the interviewee to be more disposed to communicate information, clarify or rephrase questions cf.(Mikecz 2012; Ganter 2017). I was "the other", the curious newcomer in the field (ibid.).

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[6] The general rejection rate for proposals sent to FORTE during 2016 was 89 percent.

During the interview, all the PIs were asked to come up with at least one name on an AOA involved in the particular program/project, a person that I could contact for an interview. All but one of the interviewed PIs provided me with at least one name. After having emailed the suggested persons, two persons politely responded that it must have been a misunderstanding and that they had not collaborated in this program /project and the rest of the asked persons did not respond at all. I interviewed three AOAs. Two of the tree interviewed AOAs were also researchers with former careers at universities. These three AOAs represented: a Swedish region[7], a nongovernmental organization that is also one of the largest associations for senior citizens in Sweden and an intermediate organization, a knowledge broker (Meyer 2010; Turnhout et al. 2013) with the aim of creating connections between researchers and their various audiences.

Analytical strategy

In line with the participatory turn, the call stressed elements of participation, collaboration and social impact. Therefore, the material, i.e. successful grant proposals, mid-term reports and interviews with PIs, must be understood in their context of research policy. When researchers write grant proposals they do it with an intention to convince referees of their worthiness. A considerable part of their competitiveness lies their ability to meet the criteria set up in the call. The mid-term report could in the same vein be expected to be written to prove that the proposal granted money was being realized. However, the interviews were not addressing the research funder and thus less tied to a promised course of action. Nevertheless, answering my questions concerning how plans for collaboration turned out still implied the participatory imperative permeating policy on different levels, including the specific call. These circumstances were part of what constituted the "social" in the voices I have listened to. Temporality deserves some attention in relation to the design of the conducted study. The grant proposals function as a background for the core material. This background material was already collected (see Hultqvist et al 2021) and built the base for the core material; interviews with PIs and AOAs and additional printed mid-reports. Therefore, the background material presented future plans while interviews and mid-reports were snap-shots of on-going processes.

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[7] The Swedish regions are local authorities providing health care, public transport, etc.

The initial stages of coding took place manually, by reading the grant proposals, the mid-reports and the transcribed interviews. All the material was catalogued in NVivo. I followed the six-phase approach to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2012, 2020), which meant that reading and making notes in the margins of the article was interconnected with computer assisted sorting into meaning units and finally themes, interpreted as 'social voices'. The background material served as a point of reference throughout this process. Descriptions of collaboration in interviews and mid-reports was interpreted in the light of the described plans for participation and collaboration in the grant proposals. Informed by previous research (Jönson, Hultqvist, and Iwarsson 2021; Macq, Tancoigne, and Strasser 2020) the interrogatives 'why?', 'how?', and 'what?' guided the sorting. The coded material was then clustered into two overarching themes addressing concrete descriptions of activities and procedural reports on how these activities were carried out and motives behind these activities. These themes correspond to the headings *Motives* and *Activities* below. The section *Findings* starts with an overview of the various issues dealt in the scrutinized programs and projects in order to give the reader a panoramic picture of the material.

Findings

In order to provide the reader with an overview of the grant proposals serving as a base in this study, this section begins with a brief resume. Ageing research is a diverse field encompassing research on age-related diseases, care systems and economic behavior during the life-course. Despite the heterogeneity of the topics dealt with, and as a consequence of the orientation stated in the call, a vast amount of the scrutinized grant proposals raised questions directly linked to real world issues. After this descriptive overview, I discuss some features of the empirical material, before I present the social voices of the mid-term reports and the interviews concerning participation, collaboration and social impact.

Ageing research, a diverse field

As shown in the above matrix, 10 of the scrutinized 17 proposals were granted as projects while 7 of them were more comprehensive programs. Usually, the projects span over three years and the programs span over six years. 11 of PIs were female and six were male. 13 out of the 17 were aged 50 and over. The vast majority of the grant proposals concerned health issues. Among them, register based studies on life-course patterns in order to reveal causal relationships between events in different stages of the life course and health and well-being in later life were dominating. Sometimes the outspoken aim was to influence policy and facilitate

the creation of better health systems. This was the case in one study, planning to 'explore the extent to which the last years of life in Swedish older adults entail a period characterized by severe health problems, such as functional losses, and dependency'. Another one, investigating 'how socioeconomic and cardiovascular factors in middle age and cardiovascular incidents relate to active and healthy ageing among the very old' also intended to 'stimulate the development of new preventive strategies to promote active and healthy ageing'. Yet another one aimed at 'exploring the impact of information access and innovative eHealth on patients and healthcare' and stated that it would be unique in its dual scope, evaluation of new eHealth services and sub-sequent co-creation of new and refined services with patients'. 'Participatory design' was a recurring concept throughout this proposal.

Care and care systems was another object of research treated in the proposals. While one was to take place at an already set-up full-scale-lab that was also a care home, another one was planned as a continuation of ongoing work at care homes. Both aimed at improving elderly care, involved professionals and old people in the research design and planned to create guidelines as well as courses in order to make the research findings usable even after the outlined period of research. One planned country-comparative study addressed work-life-balance and issues of paid work and unpaid care work, with the aging population as a backdrop. Results were explicitly thought 'to inform policy design to facilitate a better combination of market work and care responsibilities', in countries with ageing populations.

However, not all of the proposals gave account for concrete measures or even wishes to influence society outside academia. One proposal explicitly stated that the 'interplay with actors outside the scientific community will be rather limited' since the research objective was 'to look closely at some principles and research methods in the intersection of epidemiology and demography and to assess their potential in various areas of application'. Here, the foreseen contribution was intra-academic – to cross-fertilize two different disciplines and thereby construct novel methodological tools. Though the vast majority of the proposals concerned health issues and different kinds of care, a few did not. One of these exceptions aimed at shedding light over conditions and motivations for starting a private enterprise amongst people aged 50 and over. 'How does the decision to start a private enterprise relate to strategies for old age pension among these persons?' was a research question posed in this proposal. Reference was made to the ongoing policy discourse on a prolonged working-life, but the proposal did not contain any thorough discussion on participation, collaboration or social impact.

Taken together the 17 proposals presented a wide range of research topics, having in common that they addressed questions on age or/and ageing. They were often described as multi- or transdisciplinary but always rooted in academia through the disciplinary domicile of the PI. They were plans for research, but they were also responses to research calls, and as such streamlined by the research council's instructions in order to get funded (cf. McLean, Graham et al 2018). FORTE's pre-printed form contained spaces with the headings "Societal relevance", "Knowledge Dissemination" and "Public Engagement". If not imbuing the entire grant proposal, plans for participation, collaboration and social impact were certainly expected to be elaborated on here. Research councils have selective and steering functions on research as cash flow is connected to specific funding opportunities (Weingart 2008). Hence, far from expressing any 'unbound will' from the part of the researchers, the proposals were simultaneously expressions of scientific aspirations *and* steered by research policy.

Text and talk

Compared to the scrutinized texts, the interviews were less arranged and tidy. As I approached the PIs and asked for an interview their research funding for the near future was secured – as a matter of fact most of them were experienced in that role, used to receiving large sums in research grants. Furthermore, the grant proposals were constructed to convince an addressee. The interview with me contained no such element. I had introduced myself as a newcomer in the field of ageing research. I wanted to know how the plans for research had turned out with a specific interest in participation, collaboration and social impact. Presumably, those PIs regarding this as more than 'box-ticking' and 'scripted activity' c.f.(Boaz, Biri, and McKevitt 2016) had been more inclined to accept an interview, than those who had dutifully – but without any particular engagement for aspects of collaboration with AOAs – filled-out the specific section dedicated to "Societal Relevance", "Knowledge Dissemination" and "Public Engagement" in FORTEs system for grant proposals. The mid-reports could be classified as in-between the proposals and the interviews. In the mid-reports, the PIs were expected to account for the present state of the research. As with the proposal, the addressee was the research council, but when writing the mid-report, the proposal was already approved. No component of competition was involved. With this introduction as a backdrop, the question 'why?' has guided the next to section *Motives* while the following one; *Activities*, consists of responses the interrogatives 'how?' and 'what?'   have used the grant proposals to sketch the above introduction to the presentation of the material, illustrating characteristics of the PIs and the

different research topics. The mid-reports and the interviews reflect the realization of the plans and are analyzed in the following.

Motives

Three types of motives were sounding in the social voices on participation and collaboration as a road to social impact.

- a suitable research method for certain types of research objectives
- an answer to outspoken needs for new knowledge
- a result from the researchers double-roles as clinicians and researchers

A suitable research method for certain types of research objectives

When talking of participation and collaboration as part of doing research, one recurring opinion was that some research questions require an active involvement of AOAs, while others do not. The decision of bringing in participants from outside academia as research partners was generally not rooted in a certain attitude or an ideology. The social voices did not resound neither with arguments on empowerment or democracy rooted in a discourse on deliberation nor with arguments on innovation for economic growth embedded in a discourse in production cf (Macq, Tancoigne, and Strasser 2020). Rather, participation and collaboration were described as measures taken when appropriate. This way of reasoning resonances with a pragmatic view based in scientific logic. The researcher is the expert who decides what kind of methodological tools to use, among which collaboration with AOAs is one. If you want to investigate the over-risk of ill-health for certain occupational categories and there are data available in certain registers, 'you have to be good at register-based research but you don't need to be good at co-creation', one PI who was also a professor and a medical doctor said.

Epidemiology was taken as one example of a discipline where 'a systematic thinking' concerning collaboration was not always included – or needed. On the contrary, when research explicitly aimed at improving working conditions, employers were seen as crucial partners. In such cases, researchers had to interact with employers to get access to their opinions in order to make sure new findings were spread among those who were in the position of changing working environments. The pragmatic approach of looking at collaboration as part of a methodological toolbox was also reflected in the reasoning of one interviewed AOA who was a retired professor in geriatrics and now represented one of Sweden's largest non-profit organizations for senior citizens. According to him, it is nearly a must to stay in contact with those who are concerned

and discuss the results repetitively, when the study is explorative, when there is no clear hypothesis and 'when the research problems concern major societal problems with large populations'. This scenario was put forward as the opposite from the one where a limited clinical trial in a certain drug was being conducted. Whereas it is forbidden to interact in a clinical drug trial, you ought to do it in an explorative study on complex societal problems. The opinion that complex societal problems should be coped with by joint action from researchers and AOAs reflect policy on both national and EU-level (bill 2016/17:50 (Walker 2011; Macq, Tancoigne, and Strasser 2020)). The same interviewee concluded that the explorative way of doing research together with those who are concerned is often convenient when the population under study consists of elderly individuals with multiple chronic conditions and disabilities having to do 'not only with the own body but also with a lot of other social factors'.

An answer to outspoken needs for new knowledge

Another motive for cooperation with AOAs that was mentioned in the interviews was that different parts of society demanded new knowledge. Regions, municipalities and the media were asking for new knowledge 'and knowledge is what it is all about in research'. One PI who was also a psychiatrist and a professor made this statement. Her field of research was suicide among elderly people. She stressed her own field of interest as an under-researched field. In this field, the healthcare institutions turned to academia with 'crying needs' for knowledge in order to improve services. Communication with individuals with dementia was another topic, where municipalities had difficulties in finding appropriate working methods and had turned to academia, according to one PI who was also a professor and a psychologist. 'There is a need of new knowledge, not least as a growing part of the ageing population are second language speakers', he said.

A result from the PI's double-role as clinician and researcher

Describing collaboration as stemming from the double identities as both a clinician and a researcher was yet another way of explaining why research was conducted in collaboration with AOAs. This attitude was salient in the interview with the PI who was a psychologist. From his point of view, user participation, collaboration with knowledge brokers and municipalities were all natural parts of his daily job as a researcher; of what he did when he engaged in paid work.

> …many of us has a background as clinicians. The speech-therapists have, I'm a psychologist. If you have that kind of background it is natural that you want your research to make a difference.

> You do research because you are very engaged in your clinical field. It has always been quite obvious for us. It matches the fundamental motives for doing research…

As in the quote above, another researcher referred to his double identity as a clinician and a researcher. This PI explained to me that he was leading a somehow 'schizophrenic existence' working 14 hours a week as a clinical medical doctor, while the rest of his working hours were dedicated to his role as a professor. He meant that 'contributing to life quality among old people' was 'the ultimate public good'.

> I'm really animated by this and it was such a relief to get to know the crew from the geriatrics. This is a study on becoming healthy, have a spark of life when 80 or 90 years old. That's what I see as the ultimate public good in my simple world, considering a growing, ageing population where proportionally more people will develop age-related depression and dementia. Could we then identify the factors that keep people well and in good spirits, then it is a huge public good. In my view, it is as simple as that.

The above accounts answer the question 'why?' in relation to participation, collaboration and social impact as part of the job of doing ageing research. Participation and collaboration were often described as the result from scientific assessment; as a research method suitable for certain types of research questions, in order to fulfil some scientific aims but not all. Another discourse presented collaboration and participation as a direct answer to a need expressed by surrounding society. Media, municipalities and regions had asked for new knowledge. In many of the interviews, the purpose of engaging with AOAs was tightly linked to one's own 'professional biography' including a vocational history as a clinician. In this discourse, a collaborative way of doing research was explained by the commitment to one's own professional ethos as a physician or a psychologist. With reference to Weber, the personal engagement or the mission that characterizes the role of the researcher stems not from the truth seeking in academia, but from the moral and value-laden duty of one's (former) role as a clinician.

Deliberation, defined as one out of two main EU-discourses within the participatory turn (Macq, Tancoigne, and Strasser 2020) was salient only in a few of the social voices of the mid-reports and the interviews discussing purposes for collaboration. On the contrary, production – not in strictly capitalist sense but as the action of making from components, putting together parts manufacturing a product and yielding results, was often present in the discourses. Hence, the activities described had much in common with the productive interactions suggested to be at the heart of social impact cf.(Spaapen and Van Drooge 2011), interactions that yielded results

Four types of activities or 'work descriptions' were sounding in the social voices on participation and collaboration as a road to social impact. The concrete activities described how collaboration and participation were enacted were the following:

- Third task
- Education
- Contract work
- Joint action

Third task

A leading discourse among the social voices discussing the activities of collaboration and participation in relation to the work done in one's own research program/project described collaboration as the third task. Producing policy briefs in order to reach out with findings and get in touch with stakeholders was one concrete measure taken and employing a communicator who could engage in writing press releases and coordinating the contacts with media was another one, mentioned by the PI who was a professor in demography. Participating in different kinds of exhibitions and fairs, giving public lectures and taking part of panel discussions were other kinds of activities that occurred in several mid-reports. In one mid-report a PI who was a professor in social gerontology stressed psychical meetings with representatives from political institutions such as the Swedish government and The EU-commission as examples of collaboration aiming at fulfilling the third task. As the research programs and projects under study to a large extent treated issues of health, healthcare systems and care systems, it was no surprise that the enactment of third task activities mainly concerned social and not economic impact cf. (Compagnucci and Spigarelli 2020).

It is generally recognized that communication alone is probably not sufficient to ensure effective knowledge utilization (Turnhout et al. 2013). Dissemination of research results was a more or less taken for granted activity among the interviewees, but the majority of the interviewees also affirmed that there was no obvious causality between dissemination of results and social impact. The AOAs who represented the national competence center explained to me that the role of the own organization as a broker was a consequence of the universities' failure to carry out the third task:

> We are a national competence center. We don't do research but we repackage results and experiences in order to get the messages through. We have taken on the role of the universities, the third task. We know that it doesn't work optimally.

The role of the broker was also depicted as a hub 'collecting and spreading knowledge through the web'. Universities, civil society organizations, schools and authorities are partners when this national competence center is operating. The picture sketched by the AOA reflected the relations and the roles described by the collaborating PI.

> From our perspective, we look at it as a way of turning over knowledge from research into education directly targeting people who work in elderly care and caregivers and individuals with dementia.

Contract work

The AOA representing a Swedish region described collaboration with academia as a way of getting the work done, contracting out work tasks to consultants. She stated that 'the problem is not to get money. The problem is to spend them'. People in academia gladly received money from her 'but they want to spend them as they wish', she said. In her opinion, collaboration with academia was about providing the own organization with appropriate knowledge and the trickiest part of this collaborative work was to find researchers willing to engage in research projects needed by the region. Here, noncompliance from the part of the academic researcher hindered collaboration. However, collaboration in this discourse did not imply mutual understanding and joint action, but merely transaction of money. Research could be ordered and payed for; a contract work.

Education

Education was described as collaboration in a range of ways. One type of education described was academic courses for future professionals. According to two PIs – medical doctors with different specialties – students studying to receive a specific occupation within the field of healthcare received courses that were tailor-made for them and based on current research in their programs. Linking research directly to professional education was one way of trying to make research influence future health-care professionals and thus impact the world outside academia. Another kind of education described as collaboration was further education for groups of practitioners who already worked in the healthcare sector. 'Workshops with staff working with elderly people' was one example mentioned by the PI who was also a psychiatrist. Another one was a web-based education on loneliness and social participation among old people, targeting staff working with home care. The web-education was briefly described in the

mid-report from one PI was a professor in work therapy. The demographer PI gave 'writing a text-book' as an example of collaboration resulting in a concrete product. While the third task has been mandatory for Swedish researchers for less than half a century, education is a core work task for academic researchers cf (Hetland, Kasperowski, and Nielsen 2020; Molas-Gallart et al. 2002). Hence, it is striking how the participatory imperative has come to include both activities regarded as traditional core tasks for academic researchers, i.e. education[8], and the kind of labour that is regarded as a subsequent addendum, not really an essential part of the vocation of academic research.

Joint action

Given the many non-responses, it was not surprising that the interviewed PIs and AOAs easily listed examples of activities and artefacts that in their opinion represented participation, participation and social impact. Presumably, those PIs who did not accept my invitation would have provided me with more disillusioned depictions. However, even among the interviewed PIs I could discern one discourse that expressed if not resignation, so dampened expectations. When I asked one of PI who was a PhD and a pharmacist if the research team had had any plans for involving citizens I got the following answer.

> We had original plans that we have now abandoned. Originally, we would develop an app where the users could estimate their sickness symptoms and register when and what kind of drugs they take, in order to see if the drug does affect the symptoms. But the one who was developing the app got a new job and we didn't get access to the pharmacies, so we put that development aside.

The same PI argued that collaboration with AOAs very much depended on external factors, on circumstances out of her control. Seen as such, collaboration meant to renounce some of the mandate usually belonging to the role of being a PI. In a research project you only have limited amount of time to your disposal. Everything takes much longer than expected and you have to deal with delays. In such a scenario, you take what you can get instead of carrying out the planned activities. This way of reasoning comprised an acknowledgment of the fact that collaboration is reciprocal. Joint action cannot be performed with less than the active engagement of both parties; both researchers and AOAs. Moreover, the enactment of planned collaboration could not be taken for granted. From the perspective of the PI, collaboration was

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[8] Max Weber (1951) has stated that becoming a researcher is not only to get qualified as a savant, an expert. It also includes becoming a teacher. "Er soll qualifiziert sein als Gelehrter nich nur, sondern auch: als Lehrer." (p. 570)

seen as a risky enterprise that easily could be overturned by unforeseen events, like someone in the team quitting or a manager among the AOAs suddenly reprioritizing. As a consequence, the collaboration that did come about was the one where researchers were flexible enough to 'seize the day'.

The above accounts answer the questions 'how?' and 'what?' in relation to participation, collaboration and social impact as part of the vocation of doing ageing research. Given that the third task has been broadly defined as the interactions between universities and the rest of society (Molas-Gallart et al. 2002), it was no surprise that collaboration as an activity was described with the same concept, as the third task. Noteworthy is that this description was mainly used by an AOA, a knowledge broker, who argued that this role was taken on, since academia had failed. Somewhat contradictory, collaborations were also depicted as education. While education and research traditionally have been considered as core activities of academia, third task has represented something else. Here, both third task-activities and activities related to education were talked of as participation and collaboration in order to obtain social impact. The discourse on collaboration as contract work expressed an opinion where the interaction between the AOA and the PI was an agreement between a buyer and a seller, a financial transaction. While the social voice talking of collaboration between academia and AOAs a contract work stemmed from an experienced AOA, the one speaking of a risky business was a junior PI. These dissimilar voices give rise to questions about power and agency. Who is the one to participate in whose enterprise?

Discussion

First of all, given the strong emphasis on participation, collaboration and social impact in the call and the commitments made by the PIs in the grant proposals, the difficulties arranging interviews focused on the same topic with all the PIs, is notable. One possible reason for not accepting the invitation was that the topic – participation, collaboration and social impact – was not perceived as relevant by all the PIs. Though the participatory imperative is clearly stated in research policy, the PIs might have experienced that using some buzzwords in those fields of the grant proposals where one is supposed to elaborate on how societal relevance, knowledge dissemination and public engagement are to be obtained, is enough. Previous research has shown that these activities are sometimes seen as 'box-ticking' in order to get funding secured (Boaz, Biri, and McKevitt 2016). Furthermore, the two responses from AOAs assuming I was emailing the wrong person and the non-responses from a handful of persons suggested as suitable AOAs to interview, indicated that whereas researchers included occasional contacts

and superficial connections with AOAs when they talked of participation, collaboration and social impact, AOAs not always saw themselves as involved. All in all, the many non-responses and the cleavage between what researchers and what individuals called participants or partners perceived as participation and collaboration give rise to new questions for future research. How much agency does it take to obtain participation and who is to define collaboration?

Zooming in on the interviews that did take place and having followed Burowoy's suggestion to talk with fellow researchers about participation, collaboration and social impact in the very research field; ageing research, that I am part of myself, I conclude that the standard tale telling us that Swedish researchers do not engage in collaboration with actors outside academia must be nuanced. When scrutinizing research as a vocation with a focus on the participatory turn imposed by research policy, a range of motives and motivations for participation and collaboration are being declared. Also, the interviewees have described different kinds of collaborative processes, activities and artefacts aiming at social impact. By linking Weber's more than hundred years old ideas in "Science as a Vocation" with the contemporary line of research trying to grasp the meaning of 'social impact' and 'third task' in the era of a participatory imperative, I would argue that while some things have undergone fundamental change, others have stayed quite the same during the last century. Let's start with the dissimilarities. As reflected in the selection of material of this study, men and women are employed as academic researchers today. In fact, the vast majority of the selected grant proposals were written by women. Another characteristic that distinguishes the PIs in this study from Weber's typical researcher, 'the young man', is that 13 out 17 successful PIs were aged 50 and over. Over to the similarities. What Weber pointed to as a novelty in 1919, is an established fact 100 years later. It is not controversial to talk of 'doing research' as wage labour today. As in Weber's lecture, a clear personal engagement, a mission, resonated in the social voices of the interviewed PIs in this study. However, this engagement did not stem from their identities as truth-seeking scholars, but from their vocational history. The incentive for collaboration with AOAs and their wishes to impact society were rooted in their ethos as a psychologist or a physician – or as empirical researcher dealing with real world issues.

Conclusion

How participation and collaboration as part of the vocation of research, in the field of ageing research, was conducted could be stylized in two stereotypical discourses. The first and most common one is *business as usual*. Here, a senior scholar with an extensive network, partly

stemming from a former career as a clinician, strategically works together with AOAs in accordance with norms and values of that profession, as for example cure diseases or cope with loneliness. Participation and collaboration is enacted as part of a planned methodology and could come as jointly written textbooks, workshops with practitioners or web-based educations targeting practitioners or lay people. In this scenario the aim and questions set up by the researcher steer the participation and collaboration. The second is *seize the day*. In this clear, but delimited discourse, a junior scholar has an elaborated and detailed plan for collaboration with AOAs, but is forced to abandon these as the foreseen partners – for one reason or another – do not participate as planned when the participation or collaboration are about to be enacted. Here, the scholar adjusts the plans, and instead of steering and coordinating tries to make use of given opportunities. The aim and the research questions are adjusted to those opportunities for collaboration with AOA that occur.

Finally, looking at these stereotypical discourses through the lenses provided by Weber encourages future research to analyze the different kinds of activities constituting participation and collaboration as means to obtain social impact to the everyday wisdom that tells us that something might be true although it is not good (cf. Weber 1951:588). The truth-seeking efforts of academia might often go hand in hand with norms and values stipulated as the common good. However, it is when the virtues of the scientific community conflict with those of the surrounding society that the real challenges for collaborative research occur.

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