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# Emerging Policy and Practices on Community-Based Research: Perspectives from the Island of Ireland

Lorraine McIlrath

Catherine Bates

*Dublin Institute of Technology*, [catherine.bates@dit.ie](mailto:catherine.bates@dit.ie)

Kenneth Burns

Ann Lyons

Emma McKenna

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Lorraine McIlrath, Catherine Bates, Kenneth Burns, Ann Lyons, Emma McKenna, and Padraig Murphy

## **Emerging Policy and Practices on Community-Based Research – Perspectives from the Island of Ireland**

*By Lorraine McIlrath, Catherine Bates, Kenneth Burns, Ann Lyons, Emma McKenna and Padraig Murphy*

*In recent decades, much ground has been lost in terms of the public realm; that shared essential space of scholarly discourse and contestation of an independent people free to participate and change their circumstances, to imagine their future – be it in Ireland, Europe or at global level has to be reclaimed by generous and open scholarship. . . The challenge is to ethically reconnect economy, culture, science and society and in the process of so doing, to recover or reinforce an ethos of emancipatory scholarship. Independent thought, from home and abroad, and scholarly engagement with our current circumstances are crucial (Higgins, 2012, p. 1).*

### **Introduction**

It is our shared understanding that one of the core roles of higher education is ‘to reconnect economy, culture, science and society’ as argued by the current President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, and, in doing so, evolve scholarship that creates positive social change through the fostering of collaborative partnerships with community and the wider society. Higher education is going through a period of rapid change as globally the economic recession has caused a shift in conceptual thinking from economic foci towards engagement with community and society (Escrigas et al, 2014; Inman and Schuetze, 2010). It is widely agreed in principle that higher education institutions can play a pivotal role in terms of societal well-being through their three core activities of research, teaching and service (service can also be called, engagement or outreach). Watson (2007) argues that it is through an intentional civic or community engagement strategy and practice that higher education can impact positively upon community and society. There is a multi-faceted rationale for the development of community and civic engagement strategies and practices within higher education. For example, within the context of Northern Ireland (as part of the United Kingdom), engagement or public engagement with research has gained traction as a result of a concerted effort by research funders to seek impactful research that resonates with, and is responsive to, society. While in Ireland, engagement is seen as central to economic and social development and recovery in a period of fiscal crisis. As the ‘value added’ role of higher education in community engagement gains growing recognition, on the island of Ireland, a range of approaches have developed to foster greater civic and community engagement, including Community Based Research (CBR).

In this chapter, we articulate understandings, principles and characteristics of CBR and discuss its position within an all-island Irish context, examining both national and local policies and practices. We then highlight five vignettes of institutional practice that have evolved across the island of Ireland to support and develop an institution-wide approach to CBR. Opportunities and challenges to community-based research are explored with regard to Northern Ireland, which is part of the

United Kingdom (UK), and to the Republic of Ireland, both of which have different higher education systems, policies, structures and funding arrangements. As part of this analysis, we discuss networks that support this work across Ireland, in particular Campus Engage, a platform to support the development of civic engagement activities across Irish higher education. This development is framed against a new Irish higher education policy vision whereby 'engaging with the wider society' is 'one of the three interconnected core roles of higher education' alongside teaching and learning, and research (DES 2011, p. 5). Within the UK context, the Department for Employment and Learning (DELNI) produced a strategy *Graduating to Success: A Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland* (2012) which emphasises the importance of research, teaching and engagement. We conclude the chapter with a concise overview of possible future developments in CBR practice and policy implementation.

### **Community-Based Research: General Principles and Local Flavours**

CBR seeks to connect communities and civil society organisations with higher education institutions (HEIs) through student, and also through staff, research activities. The starting point of CBR is a research question or puzzle generated by, and of significance to, the community. Community in this sense could mean local co-operatives, voluntary or not-for profit organisations such as mental health charities, community gardens, services for persons with disabilities, and local communities identified by a clear geographical affiliation. It could also mean communities of interest around a shared topic of concern such as the local economy, health, housing, or crime, all of whom are seeking collective social action (Strand *et al.*, 2003). These groups of engaged citizens seek a way to partner with their local HEI and CBR initiatives are vehicles for this matching service (known as Science Shops in some countries. See Chapter 6 by Steinhaus on the development of Science Shops). CBR initiatives can involve both academic staff and students. Academics can engage through supervising student researchers, or through collaborating with communities in their personal research activities. Students can be involved in CBR from undergraduate to PhD level, and are matched with community groups to work on their research questions as part of the students' course work.

CBR can be placed within what is known as the Mode 2 form knowledge production (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994), a mode that centralises participation, democracy and social accountability in academic research. Mode 2 is differentiated from Mode 1 knowledge production which has, traditionally privileged the lone researcher in his/her lab, is hierarchical in nature, may work under public patronage, and from which innovation arises in a linear way. It represents an epistemological change as much as a procedural one. CBR can be positioned therefore within the participatory paradigm that centralises the importance of action and collaboration (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). CBR is not characterised by a particular method (McDonald, 2009); rather, it is the *principles* informing this approach to research which are its hallmark. While there is a common set of principles that distinguishes CBR across different countries, the local CBR initiative often derives its *flavour* from the local culture, disciplinary background of the participants, policy frameworks and available

resources. The Community Health Scholars Programmes define community-based research as:

*A collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR [community-based participatory research] begins with a research topic of importance to the community and has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change..." (2001, cited in Minkler and Wallerstein, 2003, p. 4).*

In seeking to promote equitable relationships between HEIs and the wider community, the 'flow' of resources and knowledge is not just from HEIs to the community. The community brings its own strengths, knowledge, locally derived questions and capacity to the research relationship, and contributes to the training and civic engagement of student researchers and the HEI. Also, CBR promotes equity by seeking to facilitate access for community groups that may feel excluded from the HEI in their locality. The CBR knowledge production process has an explicit goal of translating the findings and research process into action for change at community and/or national level. This action seeks to transform communities and society for the better. This transformation can include tackling environmental issues such as soil and water quality, addressing and highlighting social justice concerns, and developing technological solutions to support communities and citizens.

While CBR projects are commonly underpinned by a participatory ethos that emphasises equality of power relations, highlights shared ownership of data and uses collaborative research design and processes, there is variety in the degree of participation among community and voluntary groups in the CBR process. While some groups are content to provide a question and receive a research report at the end of the process, others share full responsibility for the study and operate as equal partners in the design, decision-making, and data collection (see Biggs, 1989). The degree of participation can be influenced by a range of factors, including, but not limited to, HEI research cultures; demands on community groups; perceived levels of skill; and the ability of the CBR initiative to mentor and support a fully participatory process. Many structural, practical, skills and power components can be negotiated throughout the research process, to facilitate the desired level of participation and collaboration by partners.

On the island of Ireland a number of HEIs have been implementing the principles and practices of CBR through HEI-wide facilitation units that support the development of CBR as an intentional research activity. Some of these units have evolved from a grassroots or bottom up position, with academic staff evolving the CBR activities; in other instances the units exist due to a top down commitment from senior administration of the HEI; while others bear the characteristics of both top-down and bottom-up approaches. The most evolved initiative is the Science Shop at Queen's University Belfast, established twenty-five years ago, with Dublin Institute of Technology, University College Cork, Dublin City University and the National University of Ireland, Galway at varying degrees of evolution and establishment. While other initiatives exist within the context of Ireland, we focus on five examples within this chapter emanating from our own practice. Interestingly, all of these units

are positioned in different institutional locations, including an academic department, careers, teaching and learning, and access and widening participation. The following vignettes give a flavour of the history, *modus operandi* and some of the types of CBR activities supported at five HEIs in Ireland. These vignettes are shared with the reader to stimulate thinking on the challenges, opportunities, policy context, resources and creativity that can lead to the setup and maintenance of CBR activities.

### **Community-Based Research Activities on the Island of Ireland**

*The Science Shop at Queen's University Belfast* - The Science Shop at Queen's University Belfast was established in 1988 based on models in the Netherlands where the name literally translates as knowledge exchange. The Science Shop works with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to develop research projects based on their research needs which are suitable for students within the university to carry out as part of their degree programmes. Science Shop research projects are therefore examples of co-created research, with community organisations bringing their specific needs and knowledge, and students bringing their research training and skills. Organisations typically receive a piece of research that they do not have the resources to carry out, whilst students get the experience of doing a piece of research in a real life situation which benefits both their learning and their career development. The Science Shop is based within Academic and Student Affairs, and has 2.2 FTE staff. Since 2007, this Science Shop has been funded by the Department of Employment and Learning through the Higher Education Innovation Funding Scheme. It is funded by the Department '[given] the absence of a dedicated Higher Education Active Community Fund in Northern Ireland and also the fact that the NI Science Shop . . . was widely regarded as an EU exemplar of best practice in Higher Education.' (Department of Employment and Learning, 2010) During the last three years of HEIF funding, 320 projects were developed with 110 CSOs, of which 200 were completed. Over 400 students in total were involved in completing these research projects. A further round of funding for 2013-2016 was recently confirmed. Whilst The Science Shop works with students right across the university, in practice more projects take place in environmental and social science disciplines. To give an example, a group of undergraduate Social Policy students worked with the Forum for Action on Substance Abuse on potential links between substance abuse and suicide. Their report was brought to the Northern Ireland Assembly's Inquiry into the Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm. Another example was a group of MSc Environmental Management students who worked with Belfast Hills Partnership to examine options for restoring quarries whilst minimising the impact on biodiversity. Their conclusions will be used to prepare a funding case for restoring a quarry for mountain biking and potentially for income generation. The Science Shop at Queen's University Belfast has also been involved in developing the field of public engagement with research at both UK and international levels. It has provided support and mentoring to CBR initiatives across Ireland, both informally and through European Commission funded projects such as the Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Society (PERARES) project.

### *Students Learning with Communities (SLWC) at Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)*

The Programme for Students Learning with Communities (SLWC) at DIT was set up in 2008 on the basis of a successful funding application to the HEA's Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF). Two full-time coordinating staff were appointed for three years to develop the Programme. It built on a previous DIT pilot called the Community Learning Programme. SLWC is based in the Directorate of Student Services, as part of the DIT Access and Civic Engagement Office. In 2011 the staffing level was reduced from 2.3 full time equivalents to 1.3 as the three-year SIF funding came to an end. SLWC staff secured some additional funding from the EC as part of the 4-year PERARES project, which aims to increase the involvement of civil society in research.

SLWC staff collaborate with a wide range of community partners to discuss their evolving research ideas and concerns. SLWC supports community-based learning, or service-learning, which is process-focused rather than outcome-focused, as well as community-based research, which has a research output as the focus of the work. Community research ideas are framed as broad questions, categorised by disciplines, and advertised to students and academic staff through the SLWC website ([www.dit.ie/ace/slwc](http://www.dit.ie/ace/slwc)) and in regular e-mail updates. Individual students can apply (with the support of their supervisor) to undertake research in response to these community research ideas. A three-way meeting between the academic, student and community partner is facilitated by SLWC staff to discuss and agree the detail of the research question and approach. Academics can also decide to work with a cohort of students on research questions from one or more community partners. As an Institute of Technology, DIT has programmes in many applied subject areas, and students' research projects with communities can lead to a product concept or a design as much as a traditional thesis or research report. Since 2008, over 140 research projects have been undertaken by DIT students in response to questions from community partners. Examples of CBR projects in DIT include: PhD project in Product Design, jointly supervised with Enable Ireland, to research and develop a design framework for user-centred collaboration by designing an alternative computer input device for people with disabilities; two Master's thesis projects in Higher Education and Child, Family and Community Development in collaboration with AONTAS (the national adult learning organisation), investigating supports needed by community and adult learners in order to access Higher Education; Chemistry undergraduate students comparing the relative effectiveness of different methods of testing for alcohol in breath and urine, with the Garda Road Safety Unit; Tourism undergraduate students working with Slane Community Forum to research opportunities to regenerate the local community through tourism.

### *Community-Academic Research Links (CARL) at University College Cork (UCC)*

CARL was established at UCC in 2006 and commenced student and community project work in 2010. CARL is based on the Science Shop community-based research methodology. This initiative began as a academic-led volunteer initiative largely within the School of Applied Social Studies. CARL is now part of the University's

strategic plan (University College Cork, 2013) and work has begun to translate CARL into a University-wide community-based research initiative. As CARL is a volunteer initiative with only a very small number of paid co-ordination hours, it has a limited capacity to undertake projects. Since 2010, CARL has completed research studies with 19 community and voluntary groups and 28 students, with 12 more projects ongoing. While CARL began its life as a Science Shop with the aim of meeting the research needs of community and voluntary groups, principally through student research dissertation work, it is no longer called a Science Shop (See Chapter 6 for details on the Science Shop). This term did not 'translate' well in the University since the sciences queried the name, and the humanities and social sciences felt excluded. This misunderstanding arose due to the more restrictive English language meaning of the word 'science', encompassing the physical and life sciences, compared to the more liberal German meaning of 'wissenschaft', which comprises all domains of knowledge and knowledge production.

CARL is an interesting case-study for the establishment of a CBR initiative in a period of fiscal crisis with a concomitant retrenchment of government investment in higher education. With a committed group of individuals - community partners, academics and administrators - who believe in the principles of civic engagement, widening access to the resources of the university and promoting students' critical engagement with the wider community beyond the campus, it is possible to begin small and do good work, even in the initial absence of a formal university mandate. Moreover, the support of the wider European Science Shop community, their resources and counsel, along with the advice of senior university policy makers, can offer opportunities for creativity in the design and running of a CBR initiative.

One example of the contribution students can make to the community is illustrated by a CBR project between a Master of Social Work student and a cancer support charity (see O'Connor, 2013). Cork ARC Cancer Support service sought to provide information and support through a blog. The student did a review of the research evidence to establish whether there was support for the efficacy of such a blog. Following this review, a blog was then created by the student in WordPress and evaluated. At the end of the pilot the blog had a 1,000 users a month, is still running and feedback has been very positive from users. CARL is now working with this group to further develop their use of technology through the research and development of a mobile app for evidence-informed diet plans for cancer patients.

#### *Community Knowledge Exchange at Dublin City University*

Community Knowledge Exchange (CKE) is the title of the CBR facilitating unit or Science Shop at DCU, launched in 2012. CKE in DCU is cross-disciplinary and comprises a 'Knowledge Broker' who facilitates exchanges between academics, community partners and a management team of three DCU academics. CKE takes a theoretical and practical approach, influenced by thinking in contemporary science communication and Science and Technology Studies, to facilitate co-construction of knowledge within the local community. 'DCU in the Community' was founded following the university Civic Engagement Strategy's stated aim to "To share knowledge through a sustainable university-community dialogue based on the

principle of exchange and mutual learning". DCU in the Community is the 'public outreach' campus of DCU, based in the heart of Ballymun, its neighbourhood, one of Dublin's more socially disadvantaged areas. By 'match-making' DCU researchers with local societal issues, CKE facilitates CBR activities and instils a culture of engagement within teaching and learning practice within DCU itself. CKE is now a vital part of the output of DCU in the Community.

There have been several community initiatives in recent years at DCU. However, the first that might be recognised as a science shop project was *New Communities and Mental Health in Ireland: An Analysis*, published by DCU in 2008 in partnership with Cairde, a group that challenges inequalities in society for ethnic minorities. This project identified specific mental health issues and needs of Ireland's migrant and ethnic communities. Since CKE's official opening in 2012, two projects have been completed from the BA in Communication Studies – a study of volunteers from Volunteer Ireland and a report on mobility issues for the Dublin 12 Disability Mainstream Access Project. Further studies from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science and the BSc in Health and Society at DCU are due in 2014. The target is to have twelve projects completed by the end of 2015.

DCU has also positioned itself as Ireland's 'University of Enterprise'. This creates its own tensions, as social enterprises interact constantly with Schools and Faculties. A science shop's participatory ethos fostering dialogue among equals runs up against success stories from the for-profit sector. However this was an important aspect of the origins of CKE - to embed itself into the heart of university strategy and facilitate links between the enterprise and not-for-profits sectors. All CKE research however, is carried out exclusively for the not-for-profit sector. CKE is at the heart of active civic engagement but crucially does not preclude mutual benefit to society *and* economy.

The central person in the relationships between Deans, Heads of Schools and Research Convenors on one side, and community partners on the other, is the Community Knowledge Broker. This person maintains links, facilitates social enterprises in formulating research questions and brokers relationships with suitable researchers, personnel and programmes. The job of the Knowledge Broker is to manage the relationship of academic assignment and local dissemination, and indeed, local activism. Up to this point, CKE has been relatively cost neutral, depending on a volunteer Knowledge Broker and a management team of DCU academics and NorDubCo. It now requires more buy-in centrally from DCU.

*Engaging People in Communities (EPIC) at the National University of Ireland, Galway*  
EPIC is part of the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) at NUI Galway and it co-ordinates the community-based research aspect of the work of CKI. Created in 2012, it is a relatively new area of activity within CKI, and follows on from initiatives in student volunteering (ALIVE programme) and service learning, which were established at the inception of CKI in the early 2000s. Through the student volunteering activities and the service learning programmes, solid and sustainable collaboration between the university and the wider community has been

established, and this has provided an ideal basis on which to build the work of EPIC. As well as co-ordinating community-based research, EPIC is also involved in the related areas of knowledge exchange and advocacy. As part of CKI, EPIC is core-funded by the university, employs one full time member of staff and operates on a university-wide basis. It is an important point of contact for students and staff throughout the university, who want to be involved in CBR. In addition, because EPIC is based in a centre for community engagement, it is 'community-facing' and functions as a vital first point of contact for community-based organisations that wish to engage in collaborative research with the university. EPIC strives to be an effective mediator of relationships within the university and between the wider community and the university.

EPIC is guided in its work by the principles of community-based research exemplified by Ochocka *et al.* (2010, p. 3), who define this approach to research as being, community-situated, collaborative and action-orientated. EPIC has been greatly influenced by the Science Shop model and puts elements of the Science Shop approach into practice through community-based research carried out by students, for dissertation and/or course-work purposes. However, its activities are not restricted to students carrying out CBR, since EPIC also supports community-based research activities of staff, and through its co-ordination of public knowledge exchange events, provides a forum for sharing knowledge on community-based research and advocacy. In this context, EPIC has established strong links with individual staff members, teaching programmes and research centres within the university, that are committed to advocacy, action and community-based approaches to research. These relationships are forming the basis on which EPIC is building collaborative partnerships within the university, to support community-based research. EPIC has also been forging relationships with a number of CSOs, and projects in the areas of, the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, biodiversity and land-use, design of space in urban environments and socially engaged arts, are currently underway.

### **Policy Contexts – Ireland and Northern Ireland**

In terms of institutional practice, the above vignettes give insight into the momentum being built at the individual HEI level, but we can also point to policy on higher education within Ireland and Northern Ireland that has the potential to buttress and support the development of engagement in its broadest sense. In January 2011 the Irish Minister for Education launched the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011), known within the sector as the Hunt Report. This policy vision report places 'engagement', in its many guises, on a par with research and teaching and learning in higher education in Ireland. A central tenet of the Hunt Report is 'a vision of an Irish higher education sector that can successfully meet the many social, economic and cultural challenges that face us over the coming decades, and meet its key roles of teaching and learning, research, scholarship, and engagement with wider society' (2011, p. 4). One of the high-level research objectives stemming from this vision concerns increasing research activity in niche areas that 'are aligned with and are a significant support for Irish national economic

social and cultural needs' (2011, p. 2). Additionally, "Higher education research will need to connect to enterprise and society in new and imaginative ways to harness its potential for economic and social well-being, including a more effective approach to knowledge transfer and commercialization" (2011, p. 12).

While the Hunt report does not directly name CBR, we would argue that CBR is a one core element of engagement as it presents a new and an extremely effective way to address the societal impact of research. Whilst the Hunt Report positions engagement on a par with research and teaching, there is much that remains to be done at the operational level, as currently there is no requirement on HEIs to implement an engagement mission. The Hunt Report is further supported by the *Higher Education System Performance Framework 2014-2016* published in December 2013 that seeks, "To maintain an open and excellent public research system focused on the Government's priority areas and the achievement of other societal objectives and to maximise research collaborations and knowledge exchange between and among public and private sector research actors" (Higher Education Authority, 2013, p. 2). However, it does not offer an opportunity to measure engagement activities. For example institutions could be required to allocate funding for posts to support collaborative research or learning with communities. Several of the initiatives outlined in the vignettes above have had funding threats or have lost funding and/or staffing allocation in recent years, despite the policy vision and support for this work. There is therefore considerable scope and opportunity to develop policies to support CBR and other forms of civic engagement. From a legislative perspective, the Universities Act 1997 states that the objectives of a university shall be to not only to "advance knowledge, but to also promote the cultural and social life of society and to promote learning in society more generally", with dissemination referred to as the method of sharing research outcomes (Part III, 1997). However, many within higher education see the public as the audience for research dissemination, rather than as potential valuable partners in the research process. So while policy vision in Ireland broadly offers support for CBR, as yet there is no requirement for CBR practices to be implemented within every HEI, or designated funding to support CBR coordinators within individual institutions.

In Northern Ireland, drivers for CBR are framed by UK policy, where there is a strong political emphasis on public engagement, particularly in terms of public engagement with research. In 2009, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published a key report examining the future of universities in a knowledge economy. This report offered a blueprint of the way forward for higher education, and was written in the context of the 'more constrained public spending environment' (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009, p. 3) of that time. Between 1997-2009 the UK government doubled investment in the research base, resulting in 'more publications and citations per researcher and per pound of public funding than any of our major competitors' (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009, p. 55). One of the central tenets of the strategy was to 'ensure that we better understand and exploit the ways in which research can make greater economic and social impact' (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009, p. 3). It establishes that 'the government will seek to remove barriers to this kind of

interaction and ... will provide incentives for wider engagement' (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009, p. 67) via Research Councils UK funding and via the Research Excellence Framework, which have sought to build 'a vision for a research culture that values, recognises and supports public engagement' (RCUK, 2012).

While the focus on public engagement with research does not necessarily directly correlate with CBR, it may create an environment where it has an opportunity to develop. In practice, many of the drivers of this policy context have been economic rather than social. More recently, policy papers issued under the UK Coalition government have focused on engagement with business. The February 2012 Wilson Review on university interaction with business acknowledged the role of social enterprise and Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in student work-related learning, but makes no reference to community interaction:

The review does not include any consideration of the role that universities play in meeting the needs of the public sector, although the role of social enterprise in supporting charitable organisations is included in the context of enterprise education. (Wilson, 2012, p. 15).

While the science and research programme funding continues to be ring-fenced at £4.6bn, the current focus at a policy level is almost exclusively on university-business interaction and on the potential economic benefits which may flow from such interactions.

Within Northern Ireland itself, in 2012, the Department for Employment and Learning (DELNI) produced *Graduating to Success: A Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland*. This strategy emphasises the importance of research, teaching and engagement, setting out sixteen projects under four guiding principles of responsiveness, quality, accessibility and flexibility (p. 3). The Strategy also recommends that a systematic approach towards community engagement on a local, national and international basis is adopted and embedded within universities. Institutions are encouraged to review their social and community engagement strategies and adopt a systematic approach to such engagement, based on best practice throughout the UK and overseas. In particular, they are encouraged to use their skills and expertise to benefit and engage effectively with local communities (DELNI, 2012, p. 42).

From a European dimension, there is broad policy support for the development of community-based research in higher education. The EC, through its Framework 7 Science in Society funding strand, has facilitated research into, and capacity-building for, Science Shops and community-based research since 2001. The Horizon 2020 research programme includes a strand on "Science with and for Society", which will continue to support the engagement of civil society organisations with the research sector. EC-funded projects such as "Training and Mentoring of Science Shops" (TRAMS) have supported capacity-building for this work in research institutions and in civil society (De Bok, 2008). The *Science, Technology and Civil Society* (STACS)

report (Gall *et al.*, 2009) recommended the creation of networks of research and higher education institutions engaged in participatory research with society.

In particular, the Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Society (PERARES) project has supported the development of Science Shops across Ireland. PERARES aims to increase capacity for mechanisms to support public engagement in research, such as science shops, and increase the public's role in setting agendas for research (PERARES, 2014). PERARES has supported networking across Ireland as well as internationally. One of its goals was to set up a cross-European mentoring network for new science shops. By funding meetings, travel costs, and ongoing mentoring by partners across the EU for the participating Irish HEIs, as well as peer mentoring by new science shops, PERARES facilitated increased contact among Irish HEIs on both sides of the border. In addition, it helped to support the international Living Knowledge Network, of which many Irish HEI staff are members, and offered two international conferences on CBR, which have acted as essential learning and networking events for Irish and other HEI staff.

Building on the learning from these projects, which emphasise the importance of networks and mentoring to the development of CBR, several support networks have emerged in the Irish context.

### **Developing practice and building networks**

At regional and international levels a number of networks have evolved in the last two decades to support the practice of CBR and other civic engagement activities within HEIs. Some of these enact existing policy or advocate for policy to be created, so as to develop a fertile environment for strategies and practices to emerge. Many of these networks have created their own policy visions or charters which the leadership of HEIs can sign up to and embed, if there is a national policy vacuum (See Escrigas, 2014; Watson *et al.*, 2011).

Over a decade ago in Ireland, those involved in evolving CBR and other civic engagement activities within HEIs, identified a need to create similar platform or network from which to develop civic engagement, through both top-down and bottom-up processes. The seed-funded Service Learning Academy, initiated in 2005 “generated collaborative conversations on the implications for civic engagement within higher education between academics, policy-makers, senior administrators, students and community” (McIlrath and Lyons, 2009, p. 23) and it was facilitated by four HEIs including DIT, NUI Maynooth, DCU and NUI Galway. Later, through a consultative process, seed-funding awarded by the HEA allowed for the development of Campus Engage in 2007, under a project entitled ‘Civic Engagement, Student Volunteering and Active Citizenship’. Campus Engage was a collaboration between another set of five Irish HEIs including DCU, NUI Galway (lead partner), NUI Maynooth, University of Limerick and University College Dublin. The funds awarded by the HEA were matched by each of the five HEIs and a key objective was to promote and support civic engagement in Irish higher education. Its activities included organising an international conference on civic engagement, a national

conference on student volunteering, carrying out a survey of civic engagement activities in Irish higher education, the hosting of seminars and international scholars and financing a seed-funding scheme to support civic engagement activities in Irish higher education. Having been awarded renewed HEA funding in 2012, Campus Engage is now located in the Irish Universities Association (IUA) from NUI Galway, which represents a neutral, national and strategic home from which to mainstream civic engagement. The network is representative of all HEIs on the island of Ireland, with 17 HEIs having members on the Steering Committee. These members were nominated by HEI Presidents, and represent a range of engagement activities, including CBR. For this second phase of Campus Engage, invitations were sent to a wide range of HEI staff, community partners, and student representatives, to meet to discuss how to build engagement nationally, and identify priority tasks that would be undertaken by working groups representing all stakeholders. The appointment of a full-time coordinator for Campus Engage in summer 2013 has proved to be a huge support for this work.

Following discussion amongst Irish partners involved in the PERARES project an all-Ireland level, the Irish Network for Community-Engaged Research and Learning (INCERL) was established in 2011 by HEI coordinators of CBL/CBR initiatives, to support each other as practitioners of civic engagement. Although this network has no funding, coordinators of CBL and CBR meet several times a year, in order to provide mutual support. INCERL's main priorities are to address practice, policy, and research/scholarship in community-based research and learning, and members of the group have been involved in several collaborative presentations and publications. There is considerable crossover in membership between INCERL and Campus Engage, which is a positive factor in the networking process and the building of a critical mass. There are plans to replicate the mentoring model established within PERARES across Ireland through the Campus Engage working groups. These mentoring and networking opportunities should foster the development of practice in CBR in both new and experienced Irish HEIs.

Within the UK, great strides have been made to cluster people and HEIs together to articulate and practice public engagement through collaborative activities and networks. Funders have made an explicit commitment to public engagement via the 'Concordat for Public Engagement' (2012) and have encouraged HEIs to make a similar commitment by signing up to the 'Manifesto for Public Engagement' (NCCPE, 2012). Funders have also put in place a range of resources to encourage and enable faculty to participate in research, which will have a social or economic impact. For example, Research Councils UK (RCUK), the strategic partnership of the seven research councils, has developed guidance for researchers to help them understand the routes to economic and societal impacts in the form of 'Pathways to Impact' (Author, 2012). Alongside the Wellcome Trust and the national research funding councils, RCUK also co-funded the Beacons for Public Engagement (2012) and the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), (2012) both of which seek to support and embed culture change in UK HEIs. More recently, RCUK has funded eight Public Engagement with Research Catalysts across the UK (2012). In addition, the latest round of research assessment, the 2014 Research Assessment

Framework, has research impact as one of its major strands (see Chapter 7 by Manners and Duncan for further detail on UK initiatives and networks).

### **Concluding Comments**

Within this chapter we have explored key principles of CBR, its practice through five HEI vignettes from the island of Ireland, policy and vision at national and European levels, the availability of funding and the evolution of networks. This chapter has tried to lay the context of CBR from the perspective of five HEIs located on the island of Ireland. There is room for further scholarship on this growing area of research practice, from a range of perspectives, including that of community partners as well as HEIs. We contend that we are now at a crossroads with regard to further developments and growth. The potential is there to turn solid and visionary national policy into implementation at local level. However, we still face challenges in terms of resources for the enactment of policy at the local HEI level. There is a need to develop posts in each HEI to facilitate the work of CBR, delineate key performance indicators and review progression criteria that recognise and reward staff for CBR activities. These changes are set against a higher education system in Ireland that is moving through a time of great flux and change with deep financial constraints. However, if higher education cannot demonstrate its societal value then what is the overall purpose of the academy? Higgins (2012, p. 1) presents us with a moral choice, "to be part of a passive consensus that accepts an insufficient and failed model of life and economy, for example, or to seek to recover the possibility of alternative futures". CBR is one way to respond to this challenge, because it is conducive to outward-facing HEIs and collaborative research activity that can lead to societal transformation.

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