How can social sciences contribute to eHealth research?

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Structure of session

- Context and motivation
- The challenge of policy and framing
- The “social scientist”- what can s/he do?
- Overall remarks

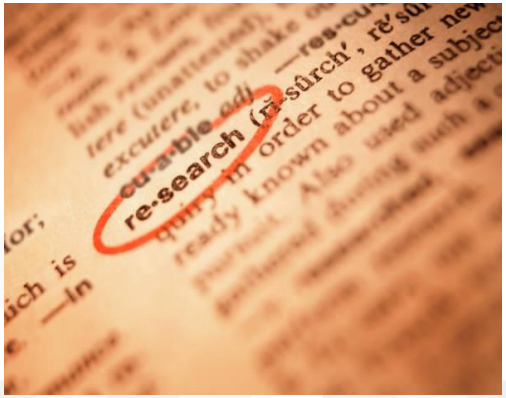
Our motivation

External factors (FUNDER-INVESTOR)

- EC's eHealth investments
- General trends in eHealth research

Internal factors (ACADEMIA)

– Dominating disciplines?
– Framing of the questions
– Self-status
– Synergies?
– Future of SSH disciplines debate



Who has said what recently?

- Future of social sciences = interdisciplinary (P. Dunleavy, 2014)
- Interdisciplinary work is not new but it is more difficult to do pure science now; SSH research subsidised by fees (Judith Rees, 2014) *also here*
- Grand challenges carry high stakes, are complex and uncertain; they are not solved by disciplines; and cannot be solved by science alone (Andrew Sors 2014)
- Being responsible at innovating means being slow at innovation (J. Wacjman 2014)
- Addressing grand challenges requires the other Grand Challenge of transforming R&D and innovation systems (S Kuhlmann and Arie Rip 2014).

Key issues

- What are the primary challenges SSH might help address?
- Interdisciplinary work? How?
- Co-design and co-innovation of today and future of eHealth. How?
- What can SSH help with?

Example – H2020 call (in relation to Q4)

Societal Challenges pillar

Theme: Digital Security: Cyber Security, Privacy and Trust (28 May 2015)

Call: DS-07-2015: Value-sensitive technological innovation in Cybersecurity

Developing ways to determine the relation between the perceived risks and benefits of new technologies in the field of digital security and their associated acceptability and acceptance;

Defining mechanisms to determine how our fundamental values and rights can be taken into account in the development process of new technologies to ensure that they are applied when used in innovative services and products;

Proposing rules and guidance on how these new technologies will safeguard these values and rights;

The challenge of policy and framing

POLICY

"The programme focuses on challenges to tackle rather than disciplines to be financed. We need this approach because problems like our competitiveness, climate change, energy security or public health are so **complex and multi-faceted that we need to think and act across disciplines**, outside of our usual silos".

"I know that this new approach might demand new ways of working, and **new, interdisciplinary research methods** that put a strain on old habits and old structures. And we, as policymakers are also facing a steep learning curve!"

"We can't properly tackle the challenges we identify in Horizon 2020 without a solid understanding of them, without **economic, social and cultural analysis**, and without discussing how the issues might develop in the future. This is why the **Social Sciences and Humanities are anchored at the heart of Horizon 2020"**

Commissioner Geoghan-Quinn*, Horizons for Social Science and Humanities*, Vilnius, September 2012

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES and HEALTH

"Information technologies offer huge opportunities to improve health and social care but it is not certain that these opportunities will be grasped". (Kings Fund 'FUTURE VIEW', 2012)

"The challenge will be to develop services that recognise the differing capacity and inclination of people to grasp this power. New technologies are also likely to challenge current care processes and business models in health. Health care delivery can be expected to transcend local and national geographic boundaries, as health professionals no longer need to be in the same geographical location as patients in order to manage their care. Information technology will also influence the ways in which professionals manage and make use of knowledge and change the way in which professionals are trained" (Ham, Dixon, A, Brooke, *Transforming the delivery of health and social care,* Kings Fund*,* 2012*)*

The Problem – The Academy

- The dominance of the discipline, too, has come under severe challenge as organising structure for knowledge production and transmission, as guardian of academic culture, and as nurturer of academic identity. However, it has been strongly defended by elite members and remains a powerful influence in reward systems and in the creation and maintenance of academic agendas. It remains a strong source of academic identity, in terms of what is important and what gives meaning and self-esteem.

- It is true that, for some, the ideal mode of research is still to create a niche or bounded space, in which, free of external interference, it is possible to sustain an individual epistemic identity and a distinctive agenda at the head of a research group. Most regard such 'negative freedom' as a thing of the past, not only because of a changed policy environment but also because developments in science necessitate collaboration outside as well as inside previously well-established disciplinary boundaries.

(Henkel,M, *Academic Identity and autonomy in changing Policy Environment*, Higher Education, 2005)

The Problem - Institutions

- “We recognise that the research councils are but one element in the larger institutional fabric of UK research and science policy, but we would argue that they should figure centrally in any rounded account of the political economy of interdisciplinarity”
- “In the UK, public funding for basic research is especially complex as it is channeled through separate research councils representing different fields of science. Programmes to support interdisciplinary research require active collaboration between councils, and it is important to understand what factors inhibit or encourage collaboration…”
- “While each of the councils embraces a range of disciplines, they are in fact the institutional expressions of macroscience communities, ….. Thus, the ESRC represents and is responsible for the health of the social sciences, just as the NERC is for the environmental sciences”

(Lowe, P, Phillipson, J*, Barriers to research collaboration across disciplines: scientific paradigms and institutional practices*, Environment and Planning A, 2009)

EU Framework Programmes - Some observations

Membership of Advisory groups for the ‘Health’ theme

- 25 members
- No social science or humanities representation

Projects funded under FP7

- Personal Health Systems – 12 projects, no SSH
- Patient Guidance systems – 3 projects, no SSH

Horizon 2020 Advisory Groups: Challenge 1 - Health, Demographic change and Wellbeing

- 25 members
- 1 Social Science representative

NET4SOCIETY

- 35 research lines under challenge 1
- 5 identified as relevant for SSH research participation

From a [multi-disciplinary] social scientist's view

In the design of the development of eHealth applications; how could one imagine the involvement of SSH within the question?

Is it difficult to work in multi-disp. research teams? If so why? What could SS researchers do?

Overall…

SSH can contribute with:

- When and in what contexts “e” is the most appropriate solution
- New economic and business models technology can imply
- Understanding how technology unfolds in practices, organisational structures and regulation systems
- Co-creation of the research problems as well as solutions