

## Learning from experience or 'not to do lists' from the EUED Gala 3-4<sup>th</sup> July, 2017, Lancaster University.

*Delegates were asked to discuss things that hadn't gone well during their EUED research and what they might do differently in future projects. This led to a set of 'not-to-do lists' which may prove a useful resource for those setting up new projects/centres.*

- Don't assume that things you don't understand are unimportant or wrong
- Don't under-resource collaboration. Need to invest time, effort and professionals (enablers, facilitators etc.).
- Don't forget that things will always take longer than you think.
- Don't bind researchers with NDAs so that they are unable to publish challenging results.
- Don't create too many dependencies on data on which there are uncertainties (quality, time of publishing)
- Don't underestimate outside influences
- Don't worry if policy makers aren't listening – keep working and be ready (there will be another one along soon!)

1. Don't rely on others for data
2. Don't be surprised when high expectations aren't met
3. Expect people / organisations to change – relationships with others
4. Don't work in silos
5. Don't expect single discipline solutions

(the below is more of 'to-do' than 'not-to-do')

1. Have Plan B
2. Be clear/concise when working with partners
3. Pushing for interdisciplinary journals and funding
4. Pre-test all the sensors
5. Keep conversations open
6. Get your fundamentals beforehand
7. Learn to collaborate with others
8. Learn to be more open

- Start a project without clear responsibility for tasks and project management
- Leave integration of institutional/disciplinary work until the end of a project
- Underestimating challenges of access and recruitment
  - E.g. interest and concerns of organisations

- Ethics of how research is framed/adapted to participants' interests
  - Potential for counter-productive narratives among communities
  - Managing expectations and engaging adaptively with sampling
  - Assume what industrial partners might be interested in.
  - Don't let your written work speak for or define you when trying to develop relationships (especially non-academic)
  - Forget to start down the pub
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- Don't rely on other people's / institutions' data (ideally work with them in creating the data / collect your own)
  - Don't underestimate the resources needed to do a good evidence review
  - Don't leave your best ideas until a grant application (seed it...)
  - Don't be too protective or precious about ideas (sharing or theft is good-ish)
  - Don't expect industrial partners will a) be able to provide all data or b) be inclined or c) can corral it.
  - Don't just see 'the team' as the researchers – for research to work smoothly needs professional support services, etc. to all work together and respect each other's challenges and needs.
  - Don't (as a manager) assume that tacit knowledge has been passed on or made explicit.
  - Don't do things 'for the sake of it' without first establishing how to assess or evaluate success/impact (e.g. feedback processes).
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1. Plan to avoid over avoid reliance on commercially sensitive data
  2. Avoid multiple parties being involved in the gathering of data to final analysis (particularly with non-academic organisations)
  3. Avoid mis(???) researcher skills and interests with project research networks (?) and objectives. Flexibility in research methods/objectives address centre goals.
  4. Over reliance on data produced by others (workpackages)
  5. Do not get led astray by other partners (used as an unpaid resource – PhD issue?).

### **Scope/language**

- Assume no debate in how everyone understands energy
- Overuse specialist terms/symbols/mathematical equations
- Restrict networking to those in the same discipline

### **Time**

- Ignore historic trends and assume these will be easy to access and describe
- Underestimate how long tasks can take to do well

## Data

- Assume quality / existence / coherence/ compatibility
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1. Energy demand is not an issue that resonates – have to reframe
  2. Don't underestimate the difficulties of obtaining data
  3. Don't assume the existence of consistent, longitudinal data that is easily accessible
  4. Don't be rigid in research designs – need to be flexible and adaptable as the world changes
  5. Don't be reliant upon policy processes keeping to plan and timeline with the same people remaining involved
  6. Don't expect that researchers with the required skills will be easy to find.
  7. Don't expect straightforward answers – be prepared for unexpected outcomes and interesting new questions
  8. Don't assume that methods that work well in one field (or for one type of question) will be easily transferable to another field or question.
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- Alignment of research objectives within teams can be a challenge – needs visionary leadership with time to deliver effective coordination
  - Relationship building requires specific capability that is not necessarily always available in early career researchers
  - Multiple relationships within key communities of practice are crucial to delivering effective impact – don't assume that if you have one person involved that you have their organisation
  - Mutual respect is a crucial element to delivery of an effective centre and everyone needs to be committed to working together
  - A good outcome doesn't have to be total agreement – understanding the lack of agreement is illuminating BUT there doesn't need to be a common intellectual agenda
  - Industrial engagement drives a short-term agenda that sits in tension with longer-term research objectives. Relationships need continuous effort – individuals change and consider 'spheres of influence'.
  - Assessing data and quality of data – assume time and costs of data collection will be higher than you first expect
  - When good data is collected staffing structures lead to insufficient analysis – design research better to ameliorate this – spend more time on design of research and plan for this at proposal stage.
  - Making research relevant to audience and package messages appropriately – think about audience from the beginning
  - Ensure collaboration and live with the tensions that occur, recognising that those can ultimately be creative.
  - 'Advisory boards' are an important vehicle for engagement but need to recognise how they can deliver value in both directions and that they will change over time and different groups will be relevant in different situations.

- Do not underestimate the administrative non-academic support required for running a centre.
  
- Industrial partners (timing, priorities) and community organisations
  - Learn how to manage relationships with groups who disagree about what research is.
  - Different timescales from industry where really they wanted to step back
- Short term vs longer term actors – more difficult to communicate. They didn't have time.
- So next round, better dialogues with stakeholders → less stakeholders. We have wider influence.
- Problems publishing combined social and technical work. → different journals
- Published too late when model was 'good enough'
- Using practice theory in quantitative analysis e.g. defining practices around having dinner and its energy implications → where do you get the data? They used time use data but you can't really construct - some indication of equipment - practices from that, nor have the practices evolve.
- Sharing of research data – great but then you don't understand the data, especially in multidisciplinary studies
- Suggestion: a database of people's competencies in EUED Centres so someone could find e.g. a product designer in EUED somewhere.