

Reframing Research to Bring “Final Users” to the Forefront

Authors: Carmen Rodríguez, Kerryn Little, Pooja Pandey, Hugo Lambrechts

Challenge:

Presenting stakeholders as “final users” of research outputs reduces opportunities to make academic research meaningful and risks creating research outputs that are not needed/wanted by stakeholders or are not effectively translated to stakeholders.

Context and Discussion:

We address research where the link to stakeholders isn't clear cut but would nonetheless benefit from more active consideration of effective stakeholder engagement.

For this type of research, “final users” are often not engaged throughout the research process and impacts are discussed only in academic journals. By flipping this research approach the following challenges could be addressed:

- Effectively aligning research outputs with stakeholders' needs/wants
- Translating outputs in a way that stakeholders can engage and utilise

Engaging with “final users” alongside the development of research objectives is closely intertwined with research funding. We need to both think about stakeholder engagement when designing research proposals and equally incentivise more of a co-production style of engagement in funding calls to enable effective, intentional collaboration at this stage.

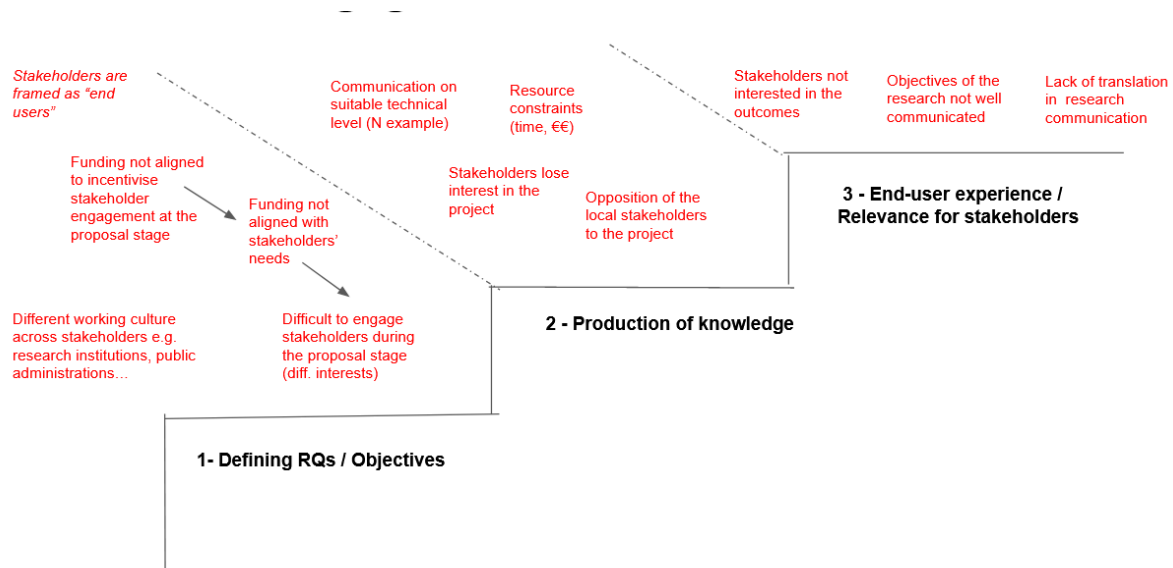


Figure 1: Conceptual representation of the stakeholder engagement “ladder” for the research process, identifying stages and challenges of engaging with stakeholders. Challenges are often compounded where engagement has not been sought at previous stages.

Options and recommendations:

- Participative methods: Citizen-science, focus groups, apps, people measuring in their own homes (or related)
- Professional facilitators for meetings
- Professional communicators for dissemination of results
- Stay aware of the researcher's role and don't lose perspective. “Why are we doing what we do?” Be aware that we are part of a dynamic environment (and thus, we are part of feedback loops as well)