

One is all, all is one? Embracing value-driven approaches in research assessment for a resilient academic future

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In recent years, the call to reform research assessment has gained significant momentum, driven by a growing recognition that the current systems often fail to align with the original mission of universities. We see an ever broadening consensus worldwide to build alternatives for evaluation systems that are entangled in a productivity-driven culture, prioritising the simplistic use of bibliometrics and prestige over the integrity, quality, and broader impact of scholarly work.

This talk explores the intricate relationship between research culture and assessment, particularly in the context of smaller, underfunded academic communities. It addresses some of the key dilemmas that are shaping the ongoing reform, such as meaningful combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, or finding balance between sensitivity to the diverse national, regional, disciplinary, and epistemic contexts in which research occurs versus keeping research assessment practises interoperable across them in a way that does not impose significant burden on those who are involved in these evaluation practices and operate with increasingly limited capacities. The talk will focus on two key preconditions of addressing such dilemmas and successfully implement the reform: community-control over the assessment workflows and basing research assessment on collectively negotiated values and missions of research organisations and research teams.

Through real-world examples and insights from ongoing initiatives, we will outline some of the paths forward that prioritise quality, integrity, and humanity in research assessment. These include rewarding the critical and often overlooked activities of reviewing, and engaging deeply with existing scholarship or strategies to build decentralised and community-owned infrastructure and databases used for research assessment. At the end of the talk, it will also be showcased how the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) supports a critical mass of research organisations, funders and other not-for-profit actors to realign research evaluation criteria with their own diverse missions under the broader, shared values of research integrity, transparency, and inclusivity.

Attendees will leave with actionable insights on how to contribute to this ongoing reform, whether as researchers, institutions, or infrastructure providers.