RRBM Responsible Research in Business & Management

Call to Action:
From the 2021 Responsible Research Roundtable to Knowledge Co-Creation for Societal Progress

The 2021 Responsible Research Roundtable (2021 RRR) focused on "Knowledge co-creation in Business Research for Societal Progress" and was virtually co-hosted by Imperial College Business School and Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM). Eighty-four academics and 64 leaders in business, government, and NGOs came together to develop a ***shared understanding*** and a ***joint commitment*** for a systemic move toward business ***knowledge co-production*** by academia and its stakeholders for the betterment of society.

The wide-ranging dialogue addressed three objectives:

- Identifying the benefits and challenges of engaged research (Why?)
- Generating demand-led research (What?)
- Solving wicked problems through knowledge co-creation (How?)

Discussions of 'Why' helped to clarify and align motivations as we moved into action oriented 'What' and 'How' sessions. During the Roundtable, more than 200 action-oriented ideas focusing on the 'What' and 'How' of demand-driven research were captured. We are now reaching back to all participants and the broader RRBM community to move these ideas into action. This requires answering the critical 'Who' question and we hope that 'Who' will include you and your colleagues.

This is a call to individual and collective action.

To support action, this report provides a summary of ideas shared at the 2021 roundtable, including highlights from the discussions of:

- 'How' to solve wicked problems through knowledge co-creation, including six clusters of process ideas and three clusters of structural ideas.
- 'What' topic priorities are suggested for high societal impact, demand-driven research, organized into five thematic clusters.

The time to act is now.

Highlights from the 'How' Idea Clusters

Solving wicked problems through knowledge co-creation is incredibly difficult, but the RRBM community and our stakeholders have many excellent ideas that fall into broad categories of process (51%) and structure (47%). The six clusters of process ideas can be implemented by research teams, schools, businesses, and other organizations in collaborative research teams. The three clusters of structure ideas will require coordinated development of collaborative structures involving both researchers and stakeholders organized around Centres, Committees, and the Community.

Some ideas that are likely to be immediately actionable and have high impact are highlighted below.

Process

- Build long term collaboration
  - Generate projects structured as consulting interventions.
- Cultural development
  - Devise new ways to create meaningful inclusion in academia and the workplace that address inequalities and engage those left behind.
- Demand-driven research questions
  - Distinguish roles of academics at different phases of research. Be clear in advance which role(s) apply, and which type of business partner is needed and will benefit.
- Incentives
  - Integrate existing incentive systems with indicators on societal impact (real diffusion of knowledge on key stakeholders and behavioural change).
- Innovation
  - Utilize platforms like The Open Science Framework of the Center for Open Science that are already available for large scale engagement.
- Translation improvement
  - Develop new ways to summarise best existing thinking, bring in practitioners from the start and describe ways to operationalise insights.

Structure

- Stakeholder – Academia, Centres
  - Develop a prototype of a centre/institute for inclusive growth and flourishing societies that includes academics, business, civil society, funders, investors, etc. in solving an "economic and social inequality" problem.
  - Partner with RRBM, business schools and corporations to create the first form of a "Business Science Institute" modelled after the Marketing Science Institute to jointly select research questions & fund projects on transitions to stakeholder centred models in business and schools.
- Stakeholder – Academia, Committees
  - Invite a diverse group of academics and business members to contribute on an on-going basis, possibly quarterly.
  - Explore ways to have academic groups engage with stakeholders in the UN, governments, and industry groups to understand and share ideas.
- Stakeholder – Academia, Communities
  - Build relationships in like-minded (maybe focused on specific topics?) "teams" or "insight communities" that can work together over time.
  - Create some kind of regular "stakeholder summit" that includes representatives of business, labour, government, civil society, and academics with a common commitment to science-informed approaches.

Highlights from the 'What' Idea Clusters

Priorities raised by participants for high societal impact, demand-driven research are articulated in the below five clusters of 'What' ideas. These ideas are a sample of the many topics in need of knowledge co-production by academia and its stakeholders.

Digitalization

Infrastructure | Misinformation | Consumer data |Social media trolling | Bias in algorithms | AI versus Humanity | Anti-globalization rhetoric | Inequality | Customer loyalty | Power of big tech | Frontline service work

Education

Access | Affordability |Digital divide | Education for girls | Living conditions | Job creation | Team trust in virtual environments | Leadership development | Effective learning approaches | Effective interventions

Sustainability

Goals & metrics | Circular economy | Enduring products and services | Personalized marketing | Intersectoral collaboration | Socially and environmentally sustainable cities | Company culture | Relationship between sustainability and job growth | Productivity in discussions of societal challenges | Socially oriented innovation/entrepreneurship | Healthcare access in resource-poor communities | Low-carbon-footprint food supply | Organizational advocacy for climate change policy | Alternatives to shareholder-focused capitalism | Vaccine distribution | Digital sustainability | Climate sustainability | Economics of ecological boundaries | Forced migration | Human supply chains | Diversity/inclusion | Migrant remittances | Social issues & consumer behavior | Supply chain issues | Authentic organizational messaging on societal issues | Inclusive and sustainable forms of organizing | Leadership mindsets | Knowledge transitions | Scaling equalities | Multi-organization cooperation | Ownership & governance models | Fair profit & value allocation | Systemic thinking | Sustainability investments | Business investment in developing nations | Brands' societal roles | Economic prosperity | Accounting standards & "social" profits | Inclusive organizational governance, processes, outcomes | Economic justice | Healthy communities | Community development | Empowering the "left behind" as a force for change | Economic equity | Poverty reduction | Intergenerational inequalities | Public interest outcomes | Population growth | Wealth inequality & compensation | Strategizing in multi-stakeholder setting | Manufacturing ecosystem transformation | Resilient management | Supply chain vulnerability | Regulation impact on SMEs

Trust

How to build trust | Trust in platforms and social media | Understanding the bigger purpose/behavior of platforms in understanding trust | How can business schools raise trust and trustworthiness of platforms | Lost trust between private industry and academia

Work

Future of work | Job quality and mobility | Inclusive organizations | Data usage | Housing/food insecurity among employees | Temporary worker motivation and loyalty | Job creation | Wages | Service innovations | Structural unemployment and retirement | Post-pandemic recruitment, onboarding, training, retention| Remote work & trade-offs | Skill shortages