17

Commentaries on experimenting with openness and engagement

Edited by Emma Roe

This chapter focuses on experimentations with openness and engagement with animal research. It presents three separate commentaries – two from invited respondents to this chapter of the book, and one from the chapter editor. The first commentary is from Bella Lear, a social researcher and science communicator who works to drive and support change in the animal research sector. Her commentary charts changes to the openness agendas in animal research from the perspective of someone closely involved with those changes. She reflects on how the three chapters in this section create new points of entry to discussions about animal research, which can add dynamism to debates. The second commentary is from Louise Mackenzie, an artist who experiments with the imaginative possibilities of extending animal welfare and care to all manner of organisms. This commentary brings artistic practice into conversation with the three chapters, arguing that honesty and truth are at stake in how openness is performed, for whom, and for what purpose. The section editor's closing commentary looks across all of the book chapters and commentaries, with the aim of identifying key themes. In this final piece, Roe identifies how the contributors have created activities where participants lead in how, where, and when they engage with animal research, rather than being presented with a preformatted vision or version of animal research. These build to reveal the contours of the animal research industry's contemporary culture of both openness and closedness.

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17.1

Changing openness agendas in animal research

Bella Lear

Scientists whose research involves the use of animals – and the ethical, legislative, and animal welfare teams who work alongside them – have changed the ways that they communicate in recent years. As a former researcher and science communicator who worked with the sector to drive and help implement that change, I have witnessed the enormous shifts in perspectives and approaches to the soft skills that underpin this animal use. Care, communication, and resilience are now seen quite differently, following a paradigm shift in how those involved in animal use talk about their work. I have been privileged to be part of that change, and here I discuss how different the working practices around animals in science once were, and the rapid changes that allowed organisations to support the innovative deep-engagement strategies developed by the Animal Research Nexus Programme (AnNex). My reflections are based on hundreds of visits to research facilities, in the UK and beyond, and on my conversations, both formal and informal, with the researchers, technicians, managers, communicators, and senior leaders of research organisations, large and small, commercial and public. Over the years, I tried to persuade them, sometimes more successfully than others, to try a new approach to talking about their research.

Prior to the 'new openness', animal research communities subscribed to a widely held belief that discretion was the better part of valour, whereby avoiding a potentially unpleasant or dangerous situation was the sensible thing to do. It followed that the complex values associated with research animals' interactions with human societies meant public expectations were best met through legislation, which was developed to represent 'society's voice'. In practice, this meant that many institutions kept details of their animal research on a need-to-know basis.

Animal facilities were windowless buildings, hidden away in basements, on top floors or in service-yards. Multiple layers of security were needed for access, and the use of cameras inside them

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was strictly forbidden, other than as part of the research protocol. Staff, including researchers, were trained not to tell anyone where they worked or what their jobs entailed. Engagement with the public was avoided at all costs, and researchers were forbidden to even showcase their work through science festivals or on their own webpages. In one research university a team of PhD students was refused permission to take a display stand to the local science festival over last minute concerns about security and reputation; others only admitted vetted participants to carefully managed public events, which were planned to avoid awkward questions or disruption. Support and administrative staff, students and – in some cases – senior managers at UK universities had no idea that the animal facility existed, and I attended events where senior figures proudly, and incorrectly, declared that their institution did not use animals in its biomedical science. At the time it all seemed to make sense, as talking about these sensitive topics would draw unwanted attention to a clear 'PR own-goal'.

This changed with the adoption of openness and transparency initiatives by the UK life sciences sector,[1] which followed years of work by the Science Media Centre, RDS, Coalition for Medical Progress, the Wellcome Trust, and others to encourage those who used animals in science to discuss it publicly.[2] This 'new openness' was pioneered by the well-documented media campaign of the University of Leicester, as it responded to protests at the building of their new animal facility, culminating in a public opening of the building in 2012.[3] The Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK, initiated in 2012 and finally launched in 2014, used underpinning public dialogue work to consider public expectations around openness and animal research.[4] It asked what people wanted and felt that they should know about this challenging topic; it also aimed to show the leaders of research organisations how they could communicate more effectively without catastrophe. It supported the aims of governance bodies such as Research Councils UK, National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, and Sciencewise[5] in creating a policy change that facilitated public engagement with research.

Communication with wider publics, beyond those who worked with animals, was the focus from the outset, but within the first few

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years it became clear that conversations within organisations were equally critical. Internal discussions encouraged those involved with animal research to think again about how and why it was conducted. They increased the visibility of animal research within an organisation, so that it needed to be more accountable. The positive impacts of this were wide ranging, including higher quality applications for animal technician positions (now openly advertised) and reported improvements to animal welfare related to greater investment and oversight.

Participation in public discussion, with its potential to mitigate the risks around a controversial topic, was of course an important motivator for driving the change, but contrary to the assumptions of some, the Concordat was not developed to shape or dictate public acceptance, nor to win approval for the use of animals in science. Rather, the Concordat's aim was to offer organisations ideas and practices, enabled through high-level commitments, to help them demonstrate their motivations and considerations when dealing with ethically complex research. Many signatory organisations committed to a considerable overhaul of the information they provided publicly through their websites, taking information that had in the past been confined to intranets and making it fully accessible. Links to these collected 'Concordat websites' were made accessible through a single, easily located webpage. In addition, these websites were required to be easily located by an individual browsing or searching for them.[6]

An important aspect of these commitments was that they should support the media with access to reasonable and balanced information about animal research, so that they could, in turn, present a fair perspective to the public. Public engagement activities, which focus on two-way, often deliberative activities involving 'outsiders' and non-specialist audiences, are another important aspect of these public-facing initiatives. However, it requires strong groundwork in institutional transparency along with fresh thinking to initiate programmes that are truly innovative and engaging, so these are often difficult to fully realise.

The 'openness' shaped through the UK Concordat has given rise to similar *transparency agreements* across the EU and worldwide, with New Zealand recently launching their version, and Australia

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and the US both working to develop similar codes of practice. Like the UK's Concordat on Openness, these agreements are essentially sector focused, and the key actors are the research institutions themselves and the staff that work within them. Unlike the Concordat on Openness, these later transparency agreements are not founded in deliberative process, and most take the Concordat on Openness as their starting point.

There is now substantial information about the use of animals in research in the public domain but, while the landscape has shifted, barriers still remain. People need to be motivated to find out about research in the first place; they may need to ask the 'right' questions, and feel empowered to enter an unfamiliar, scientific space. Members of the public reviewing Concordat signatories' websites about animal research reported to me in my role at Understanding Animal Research (UAR) that the language is challenging, and the expected level of readers' education is high. Even when publics are motivated to question animal research, the moral complexities of the issues, and the narratives of both science-focused and active disinformation campaigns make this area challenging to engage with.

Animal research is often said to be one of the most intensely regulated areas of research, and that regulation brings established, deeply considered values and ethics, supported by rehearsed narratives. The existing utilitarian framework that underpins them focuses on the benefits to (human) knowledge traded against the sacrifice made by animals in support of our society. Animal welfare has a rich history and has developed in support of these ethics, demonstrating not only the importance of knowing about anatomy, physiology, and the disciplines they underpin, but also the value of the animals to researchers and the need to care and provide for them. These values and narratives have become accepted and embodied by the research community, so that they have become internalised and represent deep feelings for many. Developed over many years to address societal concerns, the constructed narratives to attend to animal welfare serve real purpose: they ensure that those carrying out research on animals give due attention to the ethical landscape in which they work.

Yet, despite the benefits of greater openness, it can also present risks that the public debate around this complex moral issue

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becomes static. Social benefit from public discussion about animal research will be limited if the script is already written, and the research community fails to move with an evolving society, listening to their thoughts and feelings on a complex and shifting ethical issue. However, breaking free of the usual conversations to allow the possibility of something new is as challenging as it is important.

The chapters in this section present three ways of creating new points of entry to discussions about animal research. Each one brings an intention to step beyond the existing narrative around animals in science and introduces new perspectives, inviting novel conversations on an old theme. Taking openness and transparency around animal research as a starting point, they show how shifting to different frameworks for engagement can allow access to complex moral and ethical perspectives, which challenge the familiar framing of animals used in research. Each project expands the notion of 'openness' beyond a policy focus, and into a more conceptual discussion that reimagines aspects of society's relationship with research animals. They explore deep questions about the ethical frameworks that shape existing research practices and provide the space to reflect on moral complexities and inconsistencies without criticism.

In The Mouse Exchange (Chapter 14), conversations about how animals are used in research are provoked as participants engage in crafting felt mice. On first hearing about this programme, the researchers, technicians, vets, and others who make up the core of the community working on animals in science seemed incredulous. They found it hard to imagine how a crafting activity would communicate the practices, realities, and even ethical decisions of their workplaces. The concept felt epistemologically and ideologically distant from their work and ways of communicating. This work was certainly different, inviting public participation with a low threshold, yet enabling discussions of complex emotional spaces that even the most seasoned of practitioners find it challenging to articulate.

Taking a different approach to previous engagement exercises around the use of animals in research, The Mouse Exchange did not start from openness-as-resilience. The aim was not to show

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why animals are important to science, or to counter circulating misinformation. Instead it allowed any interested parties to participate in or influence polarised discussions about rights or wrongs, good or bad, caring or callous approaches to animals. This starting point required a new approach, and participants were invited to shape and create something that they cared for.

The physical task of crafting a 'mouse' and creating a story that imagined it as a being gives participants a small taste of what it is to care for an animal. As with laboratory mice, participants are also introduced to the idea of intentionally creating an animal with a specific purpose, and what that means for the human creators and carers. The activity invites complex questions about human–animal relationships: how much of the compassion and care we feel for animals when we connect with them is co-created by the human and animal, and how much is the person investing themselves into an object they care for? To what extent is our connection with other animals anthropomorphised? What does it mean to create a living being with a specific purpose?

These are complex questions that are important to all of us, and which are considered, but not answered, by our current ethical frameworks for working with animals. Through these and other ideas of performing animal care, The Mouse Exchange enables public audiences to participate in some of the more challenging discussions that take place among the animal welfare community, yet with general audiences.

In 'Labelling medicines as developed using animals?' (Chapter 15), the authors open up a long-standing deliberation about what is the best way to illustrate personal connection to the subject of animal research. While Lord Professor Winston proposed his Medicinal Labelling Bill in 2013, it was a subject discussed at length among advocates of animal research, and indeed has been used to teach undergraduate research ethics at several universities. Obtaining or taking a medicine, whether it is prescribed or purchased from a pharmacy, is a moment of direct involvement with medical research, yet polls show that few people are aware of the requirement for animals to be used in testing medicines. Patients were provided with direct information about the use of animals in medicine development in a programme developed by the Coalition

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for Medical Progress, which was later repeated by UAR and the Wellcome Trust to place information leaflets about drug development in pharmacies and GP surgeries, though in practice providing public information through a leaflet-drop proved difficult to evaluate.

The activity described here uses the familiar notion of consumer labelling, and the ethical discussions it inspires about choice, coercion, intention, and positionality, through a creative group activity that provided a focus for participants from different publics to consider what labelling might look like. This gave participants an entry point to consider animal research and its role in society, particularly its relationship with the production of medicines, and where consumers and their ethical perspectives fit into how this is done. The activity saw both researchers and participants realising that providing a neutral statement or comment on such an ethically complex issue is impossible. Attempts at simplicity and neutrality led to further questions and a need for more extensive information, drawing public participants into discussion about the purpose and value of consumer labelling, who benefits from it, and the role such labels play in decision-making.

In 'Building participation through fictional worlds' (Chapter 16), performance art was used to allow groups of public audiences to experience the deliberations and decisions made by an Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body (AWERB) in a way that completely changed their access to, and experience of, the discussions. Researchers were able to create a new type of ethical review, embedded in a fictional scenario, and ask how and why the performative contexts of an AWERB matter to its function and the outcomes it provides.

Since the development of the Concordat on Openness, signatory institutions have been encouraged to not only provide information about animal research in an accessible way, such as on a public-facing website, but also to arrange opportunities for those outside the immediate concern of working with animals in science to join ethics committees, participate in discussion, and provide a public voice to the oversight process. However, while there is plenty of public information available, as well as institutions willing to provide tours, events, and discussions with their AWERBs, there

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is little appetite among those outside the research community to engage with this topic. The key barrier to public engagement is arguably, as the authors state, not the information provided, or its availability, but its accessibility. Additionally, researchers who use animals, and who seek to engage audiences beyond academia, either through public engagement initiatives or through more formal processes such as seeking their input to AWERB discussions, are limited by the familiarity of didactic knowledge transfer. They themselves work within a profession immersed in formal teaching and learning, making these methods a natural starting point for communications that follow established narratives.

This initiative created a performance experience in which audiences were invited to address research ethics within a creative space as 'invested agents' rather than 'aloof observers'. Altering the way that participants access and engage with AWERB-type discussions gives an opportunity to imagine things differently in a fictional space. Radically changing the approach to consider how animals can, or should, be used in biomedical research helps to question existing assumptions, providing valuable insights for understanding, training, and policy deliberations.

In conclusion, relatively recent changes to the communication of animal research have moved an uncertain and concerned sector from silence to a recognition that communication with those beyond their immediate professions is not only possible, but desirable. Many researchers and institutional representatives want to tell their side of the animal research story. They hope to show the care they take to minimise harms and support the benefits of their research, hoping that when publics understand their motivations better they will be sympathetic to the research. Indeed, public dialogues[7] have shown that audiences care deeply about the motivations of scientists when considering the potential harms and benefits of research, particularly when the subject matter seems ethically contentious or inaccessible. In welcoming new audiences into these discussions, the three engagement programmes outlined here begin the process of developing new critiques and deliberations of how and why animals are used in research.

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17.2

Can I be honest? Querying kinship and communication in animal research

Louise Mackenzie

Our deep societal entanglement with animal research is already a foregone conclusion.[8] This is a difficult reality for many of us, but one that we don't have to think about regularly, due to the relative secrecy within which animal research takes place. As a child in the 1980s, I grew up during a period of extreme animal rights activism in the UK (the chapters in this section adopt a UK-centric perspective on the whole, and therefore I will too). It was difficult not to be aware of how animals suffered at the hands of humans, with public demonstrations and television advertising campaigns showing graphic, bloody imagery,[9] and activist violence towards humans escalating to the placement of explosive devices at researchers' homes.[10] This undoubtedly shaped my own, and many of my generation's, attitudes towards the use of animals by humans. I remember feeling angry and conflicted. How could humans do these things to animals? And to each other?

Changes in legislation followed, and while reporting on animal research in the UK is publicly available, national levels of awareness are certainly lower than they were towards the end of the twentieth century. This is where the authors of the chapters in this section step in. In an academic culture of interdisciplinarity and collaborative working, researchers are finding new ways in which to engage the public in the still-vital questions around animal research. The chapters in this section turn to creative strategies, drawing from design, craft, gaming, performance art, and theatre to explore different approaches towards opening up animal research to the public in the UK.

For the authors who have contributed to these chapters, practices of animal research are tacitly accepted and understood, to the extent that the question is not, as Patricia MacCormack asks, whether they should exist at all[11] but rather, as Jacques Derrida enquires, how they can exist well.[12] Through years of specialism and increased

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mass production, most of us have become so distant from processes that work with the visceral materiality of the animal that we can no longer relate to the animal in the food that we eat, nor less see any connection between our medical care and the humble mouse. While we may acknowledge that animal research exists, it is still so far removed from our day-to-day experience that we have perhaps never contemplated the many facets that comprise animal research, from production or breeding, to purchasing, maintenance, and ultimately disposal.

As an artist, I don't have to sit on the fence when reflecting upon animal research. In fact, my research playfully jumps off the fence and dives deep into the imaginative possibility of extending animal welfare all the way down to single-celled organisms. If we could start here, with the utmost respect for the smallest motes of life, it might be possible to reimagine working practices and definitions of care. I like to think that we have a deep, ancestral kinship with all forms of life – from the smallest living organisms, free-floating on the air or in the ocean, to the great variety of plant and animal species with whom we share the planet.

I first identified this sense of kinship whilst making *Oltramarino*,[13] where my research into human uses of micro-algae led me to understand that chloroplast-bearing single-celled organisms were responsible for the Great Oxidation Event around 2.5 billion years ago and thus ultimately responsible for all current forms of life on Earth. Kinship is an interesting word: conceptually it offers a breadth of scale and at the same time encompasses a sense of duty. It implies a form of dependency akin to a familial bond, something that feminist science scholar Donna Haraway describes as a 'mutual, obligatory, non-optional, you-can't-just-cast-that-away-when-it-gets-inconvenient, enduring relatedness that carries consequences'.[14] It is this enduring nature of kinship, and how it extends beyond the face-to-face relationship, that brings me to my question in the context of these chapters, *can I be honest?*

Being honest in the face of animal research is not straightforward. Who needs to be honest and with whom? One might assume that the parties involved are the animal research community and the public. As McGlacken and Hobson-West identify in Chapter 15, 'enactments of openness around animal research have largely

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treated openness as an end in itself', with an increasing number of institutions sharing details of their animal research online and in published reports. But as all the authors in this volume attest, there is a need to move beyond one-way information sharing as fulfilment of an obligation and instead approach openness through the generation of dialogue. Scientists, recipients of the benefits of animal research, their extended networks of family and friends, and research animals all share a kinship here. Being honest about animal research demands a conversation amongst all those whose enduring relationships have consequences for one another. The requirement for honesty, therefore, is multi-directional and multi-layered.

Can I be completely honest with you, reader? My own artistic relationship to animal research is complex. In the research project, Evolution of the Subject, I chose to learn about genetic modification as an artist, to understand this technology from two perspectives: my own as an artist learning how to manipulate life genetically and from the perspective of the organism subjected to genetic modification. I became interested in the subject when I realised that genetic modification was no longer the preserve of scientific research, but extended to the realm of artists[15] and I felt compelled to understand it better. While I wanted to explore what it meant to manipulate life at the level of the gene, I knew that I did not want to involve animals in my research. My preferred choice was to modify my own cells (*in vitro*), but this was not within the scope of my collaboration and therefore we decided upon a micro-organism, the laboratory workhorse, *E. coli*. I did not anticipate quite how attached I would become to these tiny organisms, nor – paradoxically – how casually I would disregard their lives after spending years working with them in the laboratory.

I share this with you as I believe that without this experience, I could not have fully understood the implications of using another form of life as a resource. Ultimately, this is what all forms of life used in research are: resources for human use. This is still an uncomfortable truth, as the 2021 annual report from the UK Concordat on Openness on Animal Research acknowledges: 'accurate communication of harms done to animals in research remains a difficult topic for the research community'.[16] Which leads me to another question – what exactly are we being honest

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about? There is undoubtedly greater openness in terms of how animal research is reported, but what information is being shared and to what end?

The chapters in this section all deal with the question of transparency, which, in the context of animal research, has various meanings dependent upon whether it is used by animal researchers, the government, or animal protection advocates.[17] Each chapter offers a different approach for engaging with the public, which moves towards a greater transparency around animal research, but equally, each acknowledges that doing so serves to increase the complexity of 'how openness is navigated and enacted' (McGlacken and Hobson-West, Chapter 15). Two of the chapters discuss approaches that involve creative activity as a stimulus for conversation: the design of a label that declares medicine as tested on animals (McGlacken and Hobson-West, Chapter 15) and the crafting of a felt laboratory mouse to open up discussion around the making and supply of animal research models (Roe, Peres, and Crudgington, Chapter 14). The third chapter draws on gaming theory, live performance, and immersive theatre to develop an experiential world in which participants take on the role of the member of an animal welfare review body (Crudgington, Scott, Thorpe, and Fleming, Chapter 16).

While the approaches taken by each project seem distinct, there are interesting parallels. Each brings aspects of performance into our ethical relations with animal research. It is the nature of this performance that brings contrasting results. In the medicine labels project (Chapter 15), the performance of designing a medicine label maintains a certain remoteness from the question of the animal and thus introduces wider debates around who has the power to create, supply, and consume medicine. In The Mouse Exchange (Chapter 14), the performance of stitching together a fictional mouse focuses the work (and therefore the ensuing ethical discussion) squarely on the subject of the animal. The immersive theatre experience, *Vector* (Chapter 16), widens debate again through the performance of actors in a fictional world that encompasses not only a host of animals, but an array of narrative choices to make with regards to the care of each. In every case, there is performance of an action that mimics the real, rather than contends directly with it, thus distancing from the live-ness of animal research.[18]

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The concept of the 'mundane' in the medicine labels project brought to mind the work of artist Mierle Ladermen Ukeles, whose focus on the role of mother and maintenance worker as art activity in the 1970s highlighted the unpaid aspects of this routine labour.[19] Ukeles practised domestic activities as art, drawing attention to the ways in which her roles as woman and mother were not assigned equivalent value to other forms of labour. Key to this was the process of enacting the work. Thus, it is the live or lived-ness of Ukeles' actions that confronts us with the truth revealed through this work. I translated my own experience of using life as resource into an interdisciplinary workshop, which has shaped much of my work since. Key elements to this approach were a 'lived experience' of genetic modification, a speculative reflection on the process, and an intention to engage scientists with the public and not the other way around. I invited a mixed group of scientists, artists, and members of the public to join me in performing genetic modification upon live *E. coli*.[20] This liveness was important in generating honest engagement with the subject matter of my research.

What I had not expected was the honesty that would be revealed through the second part of the workshop. After I had guided participants through my approach to working with, caring for, and ultimately modifying these organisms, I invited them to enter an imaginary scenario where they were interviewed by the future kin of the organisms that they had modified. In a dark space and filmed under a spotlight, participants were interviewed as if they were themselves perhaps under the microscope. From behind a screen, multiple disembodied voices asked them questions. The responses, which I developed into the short film *Zone of Inhibition*, were revealing.[21] Participants, perhaps most notably the scientists, were able to dissociate from their day-to-day role and engage in imaginative conversation with these unseen future kin. Something about being freed from convention brought a freshness to their responses. When being asked to reflect on what they had done, the answers were surprisingly from the heart, encompassing a spectrum of views on our relationship with the use of life as resource.

This returns me to the question I began with, *can I be honest?* This question lies threefold for me in the context of openness around animal research. Firstly, given our cultural disconnect from animals that we

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use to better our lives in so many ways, how can we rephrase Derrida's question of 'how to eat well' in the context of animal research? Are researchers ready to be wholly honest with the public about how animal research is performed? What does it mean to open discussion around the number of animal welfare facilities, the number of animals, and the extent to which they suffer? Who wants this level of honesty and for what reasons? These questions are necessary to challenge the prevailing approach to openness. As the authors of these chapters have acknowledged, it is not enough to want to engage the public with information that already exists. The authors in this volume take the next step, by finding ways in which to creatively engage the public in animal research, which has led to valuable dialogue.

The second aspect of this question, then, focuses on honesty in the context of representation. In choosing to perform openness, what do we mask by not offering the real but instead a representation of it? How does this inform the outcomes? By contrast, what truths are revealed through allowing members of the public, or indeed the scientific community, to be freed from their assumed roles through imaginary scenarios?

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, who are we being honest with? Which publics need to be engaged and why? To draw from the field of participatory arts, 'In short, whose interests are being served by [the] project?'[22] This seems the logical next step. By broadening who we have honest conversations with to include scientific researchers, government advisors, animal laboratory technicians, and others who are physically involved in animal research, the honest truth of animal research can become as multi-layered and multi-dimensional as it needs to be. The question which then remains is, how can we handle this truth?

17.3

Are we asking the right questions about openness?

Emma Roe

There has been a recent shift in focus around communication about animal research following the establishment of the Concordat on

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Openness in Animal Research in 2014.[23] Institutions involved in animal research were invited to commit to being more open about their use of animals and many signed up, changing conversations within the industry. The Concordat has also altered the ways in which social scientists can engage with animal research. I am one of the lead social scientists in the Animal Research Nexus Programme and led the team behind The Mouse Exchange (see Chapter 14), which received an Openness in Animal Research award in 2020.[24] The Mouse Exchange is one of the ways that we, and the other authors in this section, have been experimenting with alternative methods of engaging new audiences and evolving conversations around animal research. The Concordat is often cited as a vital context for the increasing experimentation in engagements around animal research in these chapters. Lear explains in her commentary (this chapter) how the Concordat sought to support signatories in communicating their motivations and considerations when dealing with ethically complex research. This has been achieved by providing resources to scientists and increasing the information available to the public. In this commentary, I want to put this legacy into dialogue with the thinking about animals, openness, encounters, and experimental forms of enquiry in the social sciences that have developed in parallel.

There has been a rapid growth of social science and humanities research on the complex relationships between human and animal lives. This gives particular consideration to the human response-ability for the quality of the lives we give animals when this is bound up, often from their very creation, with human interests. These studies have driven methodological innovation around how to co-design research with sentient animals,[25] how to speak of animals in a way that does justice to their species-specific experiences of curiosity, ambivalence, or disinterest in us. These studies also remind us that we might learn something useful if we pay attention to the location of disinterest and ambivalence towards various animal roles amongst humans. In 2016, we worked to develop a collaborative agenda for social science and humanities research into animal research, which identified the following question related to public attitudes and engagement in animal research: 'Where are the opportunities for greater and meaningful public and stakeholder

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engagement in the policy and practices of animal research?'[26] The chapters in this section illustrate playful, speculative, and provocative approaches to addressing this question, broadening thinking about engagement and openness, for whom and how, informed by emerging perspectives from the social sciences. The chapters explain what it means to create spaces where the public can be heard as they are invited to play roles in animal research: to participate as maker and carer of a research mouse; to act as members of an animal welfare and ethics review board; or to perform as designer of speculative drug packaging that is open about the use of animals in drug testing and development.

Yet, when experimenting with openness and engagement in relation to animal research, it also seems important to acknowledge the diversity of species, strains, sub-strains, and individual animals at the centre of animal research, and to reflect on *their* ongoing experiments that involve engaging with humans, and where their vulnerability – *their* openness as one might put it – finds them. This is something Despret[27] and Haraway[28] each recognise in relation to animals – what if we asked animals the right questions? If we are asking ourselves whether we are asking the right questions when we open up public engagement with animal research, perhaps we should also consider more closely animals' openness to engagement with us.

Research animals in their highly variable form are often genetically manipulated in their making, and are set tasks or given treatments that often end with them being killed for dissection, tissue extraction, or in mass cullings. While these animals live in a highly controlled environment, abstracted from their ecological niche in the wild, this gains them a life free from predation and disease in the wild, but they are vulnerable, alongside the humans that care for them. Faced with the peculiarity of research animals, where can we learn how to ask the right questions to animals embedded within animal research?

In Western cultures, we learn to ask questions about animals in contexts that find it acceptable to treat animals as a resource to meet a variety of human needs: to farm and eat; to love and care for as a pet; to enthusiastically advocate for their conservation as wildlife; or to experiment on as a research animal. These are associated

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with variable expressions of concern. People can care and not care, know and not know.[29] Explaining how this happens in practice and what changes the outcome is related to the context of the encounter between humans and animals. Questions raised in the chapters in this section of the book include how the form and context in which the public currently gets to know animal research affects how they respond to laboratory animals, and what questions they want to ask. These questions about context are important given the dominant motivations for openness and transparency. The terms differ conceptually but are often blurred in practical discussions about opening up animal research. Three discourses or frames have been identified around the concept of 'transparency' in animal research.[30] These can be summarised as an ethical responsibility demanded by animal protection groups; a secretive industry's counter-move to misinformation; or a branding strategy of the animal research industry by science funders and government as part of their accountability processes, to build trust in science.

The stories that are often put into the public realm tend to reflect these interests, for example, in telling stories about eye-catching scientific outputs that involve the use of animals. What are absent are stories that address how we might be open to responding to the inherent vulnerability and diversity that comes from being a research animal in the first place. The current status quo in the UK is that both the animals bred for use in research and animals in research are hidden away from mainstream society; could or should this be otherwise? While there is a biosecurity rationale for separation and a lingering security concern, do both animals bred for research, and animals in research, need to remain hidden within innocuous buildings and basements? Is the context the same for all species used in research? Could a more varied selection of representations become mainstreamed in the case of research animals, and if so with what consequences for their future? We could compare here farm animals, who are increasingly housed indoors, yet lived historically alongside humans, leaving a legacy of friendly and concerning representations in the public sphere – from children's books, films of farm animal adventure, and petting farms, to super-dairy farms and intensive chicken farms, with rivers being polluted by their waste.

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Techniques and technologies are also used to frame openness, often building in a particular and sometimes limiting vision of both how to engage and why someone would be curious about and interested in animal research. Hobson-West identifies 'public' participation in animal research governance as being constructed through public opinion surveys, which denote this 'public' as politically neutral in contrast to those who are members of 'social movements'. Indeed, Hobson-West argues that the influential MORI survey actively homogenises and depoliticises the audience.[31] There is little attempt to differentiate by gender, social status, culture, or experience, and no sensitivity to creating opportunities for people to show how, where, and when animal research matters to them as evaluative beings negotiating ethics and morals.[32] Indeed, one could instead suggest that strategic ambivalence to animal research[33] is normalised through imagining a public who appear to not care enough to investigate, or to find out more, or to seek out the gentle flow of information into the public domain through the internet, laboratory open days, science engagement festivals, or news items. Or a public that does not choose to expose their vulnerable selves to presumed painful truths about animal research. A recent study of the Mass Observation Project archive argues there is a relationship between certain assumptions about what the public thinks and wants, and how in turn this influences changes to the practice of animal research.[34] There are consequences to the style and form of engagement.

The chapters in this section demonstrate an interest in both innovating and challenging what the everyday experience of the 'openness' agenda could be, in part by opening up the interpretive possibilities of 'openness' itself. They bring being open about animal research into everyday life, experimenting practically with invitations to engage with animal research as a route to continuing the evolution of the conversation. The chapters discuss outputs that aim to deliver public engagement that can explore the 'changing ways in which scientific practices, research governance and public imaginations connect the, often divergent, domains of science, health and animal welfare'.[35] The authors of these chapters have experience of working with a variety of different industry stakeholders, and often have closely consulted with the industry, yet

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stand apart from it. The commentaries, drawn from Understanding Animal Research and a practising artist, add different perspectives. Lear (this chapter) describes, from her insider position as public engagement lead within Understanding Animal Research, what led to the birth of the Concordat, with a prevailing sense that there is still an uneasiness about further widening engagement. In contrast, Mackenzie (this chapter) holds the question, 'Can I be honest?' throughout her personal reflections on being an arts practitioner curious about kinship with experimental life, from animal through to the cellular form. She uses the refrain 'Can I be honest?' to speak of what unsettles her about how the industry operates. Readers are left asking themselves about the honesty of their own position about animal research – are they colluding with it – and, more pertinently, could engagement as openness go further with practising honesty?

Overall, the experiments in this section involve taking materials to participants and seeing what they build and what questions they ask, rather than offering them an existing vision of animal research about which to ask questions. The chapters challenge the contours of contemporary cultures of openness by both promoting activities that engage those less familiar with the workings of the animal research industry, and rehearsing the deliberations about why some technologies of the everyday seem impossible within the research industry. The activities shape possibilities for conventional and innovative modes of engagement, which could create new avenues for participants to demonstrate when, rather than how or if, animal research matters to them.

Notes

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