

Reimagining Research Culture, Together

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National Centre for Research Culture: Conversation Series

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Welcome

- Thank you to the NCRC for making space for these important conversations about research culture
- We'll be sharing reflections from the Wellcome-funded Anti-Ableist Research Culture project
- Disability offers a creative, flexible, and often radical lens for thinking about research and research support
- Even if you are not disabled, thinking about research culture through the lens of disability can benefit us all

Access Invocation

Recognising diverse bodies, minds, and ways of processing

- Acknowledge varied access needs: visible and invisible disabilities; pain, fatigue, and stress may be present
- Invitation to engage flexibly: move, rest, stim, step away, use chat, or interact in ways that feel accessible
- Access is contextual and ongoing: not always possible to meet needs in the moment. Notice your environment, disengage if needed, and follow up later

This is free for anyone to use at: margaret.price.wordpress.com

What we are going to share with you

- Introduction to the WAARC project
- Questions to consider
- Armineh: slow scholarship and crip time
- Liz: reflections on work and relational interconnectedness
- Armineh: shared experiences of interdependence
- Liz: the role of the killjoy + closing questions

About the WAARC Project

- Two-year project funded by Wellcome as part of Research Culture funding
- Aim: to promote anti-ableism at the University of Sheffield — and beyond
- Collaborating with four Disabled People's Organisations
- Focus areas:
 - Recruitment and employment
 - Inclusive events and methods training
 - Small sub-projects across the university
 - “Crippling” the Research Concordat

sheffield.ac.uk/ihuman/waarc

Questions to consider about research culture

- Who isn't here?
- Who was here but had to leave because it was too difficult to be here and to feel unwelcome and unexpected?
- Who is here but is perhaps invisible or unacknowledged?
- Who was never invited to be part of research culture in the first place?
- What perspectives, knowledge and experiences are we missing because of these absences?

And, through the lens of disability

- How might disability affect one's orientation to time?
- How might rethinking time reshape inclusive research cultures?
- What can slow academia teach us about how long things should take?
- How are you embracing the ability to slow down?

Armineh: Slow Scholarship

The Unseen Work That Holds Research Together

- Invisible labour underpins research: technicians, research professionals, librarians, administrators
- Often seamless, relational, and rarely acknowledged
- This work creates the conditions for research to thrive

When culture makes work more difficult

- Divides can emerge between academic and professional services staff
- Professional roles sometimes seen as bureaucratic or secondary
- These dynamics can lead to misunderstanding, silence, or burnout
- But... something shifts when we're invited in as strategic partners

When value is recognised

- Feeling seen and appreciated makes it easier to contribute and speak up
- Recognition enables challenge, innovation, and better outcomes
- Psychological safety is essential for honesty and collaboration
- Example: asking “Where are the disabled professional services staff?”

Who Creates Research Culture?

- Is research culture only shaped by academics?
- What about research professionals, administrators, technicians?
- We all contribute to the ecosystem — not just the “visible” parts

The 'Wood Wide Web' of Research

- In nature, mycelium connects and sustains life beneath the surface
- In research, that role is played by relational and responsive work
- This unseen labour is life-giving — but not always recognised
- Who contributes? Who is valued? Who is overlooked?

Interdependence

- Interdependence makes access a shared responsibility
- Barriers become visible and shared
- No longer individual struggles — but collective commitments
- “People fight for what we need alongside us”



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Armineh: Interdependence in Fieldwork

Making Room for the Killjoy

- Inspired by Sara Ahmed's feminist killjoy
- True inclusion requires naming discomfort, raising challenges
- Seen as disruptive — but reveals what was already uncomfortable
- Disruption can be necessary — and generative

Closing Reflections

- Invitations to:
 - Notice what's beneath the surface
 - Value the unseen work
 - Listen to marginalised voices
 - Imagine things being otherwise

Research culture is made by all of us

- Culture doesn't just happen — it's made
- Through relationships, care, refusal, effort
- Everyone here contributes

Reflective questions (feel free to email us with your answers)

1. What do you do to support research that often goes unseen?
2. What small act of care or solidarity made a difference to you?
3. What's hard to say in your research environment — but needs to be said?
4. What would change if we centred interdependence instead of independence?
5. What does a flourishing, inclusive research culture feel like to you?



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