Theorising open research for the arts, humanities and social sciences via the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science

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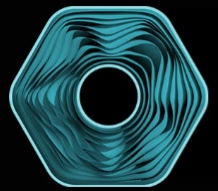

MORPHSS

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- The UNESCO model of open science - an inclusive ideal vs a restrictive reality?
- Caveats re the UNESCO model
- Exploring open research for the arts, humanities and qualitative social sciences in the MORPHSS project
- Situating the MORPHSS typology of open research in AHSS relative to the UNESCO model



Affordances & limitations of the UNESCO Recommendation’s model of open research

The UNESCO model of open science

- "**an inclusive construct** that combines various movements and practices aiming to make multilingual scientific knowledge openly available, accessible and reusable"
- Seeking "to increase [...] sharing of information for the benefits of science and society, and to **open the processes of scientific knowledge creation, evaluation and communication to societal actors** beyond the traditional scientific community."
- OS "**comprises all scientific disciplines** and aspects of scholarly practices, including basic and applied sciences, natural and **social sciences and the humanities**" (7)
- Recognising "**there is no one-size-fits-all way of practicing open science"**



Some caveats re the UNESCO model

? **Narrow understanding of what research/science is?**

- Science as "*an organized attempt [...] by means of the **objective study of observed phenomena** [...] to **discover and master** the chain of causalities, relations or interactions*"

? **Purpose of OS = defined according to STEM-focused & instrumentalising goals?**

- OS "*is a more **efficient** enterprise that improves the quality, **reproducibility** and impact of science…*"

? **Individual components centre practices of particular relevance to STEM, omitting more AHSS-focused practices**

- E.g. participation of societal actors is framed primarily around citizen science (*"scientific research conducted by non-professional scientists, following **scientifically valid methodologies** and [...] carried out in association with **formal, scientific programmes**"*)

Inclusive visions, restrictive realities

- **The UNESCO Recommendation on OS offers an inclusive model charting diverse aspects of openness**, and in theory, at least, applying to all disciplines…
- **But in practice,** emphasis is placed largely on the pillars of 'open scientific knowledge' and 'OS infrastructures'.
- **This has led to a twofold focus** in Global North policy, advocacy and discourses around open research, on:

    1. **Open access publication of outputs**, and
    1. **The pursuit of reproducibility & replicability as means of research reform**

(Albornoz et al. 2017; de Oliveira, 2021; Rafols et al., 2024).

OA policies in the global North centre STEM-based assumptions about knowledge production and exchange (outputs are articles issuing from funded projects able to pay APCs)

Has led to prioritisation of practices that support and incentivise reproducibility/replicability, e.g. pre-registration, open data & code.

These reflect STEM- & quant-focused understandings of research as aiming to create reproducible processes and replicable knowledge (Steltenpohl et al. 2023).

Often left out of the policy sphere, but more relevant to AHSS approaches?



Privileged in dominant (Global North) models & discourses of Open Science

Aims, scope and initial findings of MORPHSS

Materialising open research practices in the Humanities and Social Sciences

MORPHSS

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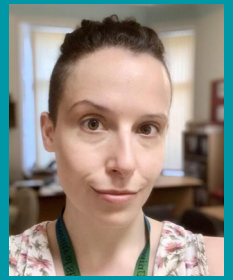

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MORPHSS seeks to develop a nuanced **conception of openness that is appropriate for AHSS disciplines** & to explore ways to materialise & sustain open AHSS practices.

MORPHSS rationale & initial work

- ‘Openness’ is emerging as a central concept in the production and evaluation of academic knowledge...
- But the dominant discourse and audit mechanisms of openness are **tailored towards STEM disciplines and quantitative research** (Steltenpohl et al, 2023)
- **There’s a risk of marginalising and devaluing** research types and areas that don’t fit these models, as well alienating AHSS researchers through language/expectations they don’t find relevant.
- As a first step, **MORPHSS sought to explore and document what existing open research practices** are actually taking place in the arts, humanities and qualitative social sciences.



Methodology & findings in brief:

Open AHSS practices were identified via a **literature review** consisting of systematic and exploratory search strategies, followed by **targeted research** around the potential practices identified.

A **mapping exercise** then identified the **types of openness that were evident**.

We found a diversity of open AHSS practices, going far beyond the canonical suite of OS practices - including:

- **Participatory & collaborative methods** - mobilising the knowledge and involvement of participants and communities, e.g. via co-production, Participatory Action Research, Research-Practice Partnerships…
- **Practices giving diverse insights into research processes**, e.g. via reflexivity and positionality, open documentation of creative methods, experimental book publishing…
- **Diverse ways of opening up research evidence**, e.g. via Annotation for Transparent Inquiry, sharing creatively refigured research data, sharing creative practice outputs, applying the CARE principles…
- **Inclusive, accessible communication of research**, e.g. via academic podcasts, virtual exhibitions, and other forms of public scholarship…

We also found a diversity of *forms* of openness - beyond evidencing transparency / supporting reproducibility

catalogue.morphss.work

MORPHSS

Catalogue of Open Research Practices in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

This is a living, iterative, and collaborative showcase of open research practices within the arts, humanities, and social sciences disciplines. Learn more

PRACTICES

Academic/Scholarly Podcasting

Annotation for Transparent Inquiry

Applying the CARE Principles to Data from Marginalised Communities

Authorship (Collective, Collaborative or Communal)

Co-production

+25
Practices



Applying the CARE Principles to Data from Marginalised Communities

Last Updated 14 January 2026 Show Versions

Participatory Openness | Epistemic Openness | Evidentiary Openness

DESCRIPTION

Disciplines include: archaeology, anthropology, geography, linguistics

The CARE principles are a set of values developed by the International Indigenous Data Sovereignty Interest Group, under the aegis of the Research Data Alliance and in consultation with a wider group of Indigenous Peoples, organisations and stakeholders (Carroll et al., 2020). The principles can be viewed as part of movements towards Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Indigenous People's rights to assert control over their data. They also seek to balance the technical and functional approach to data management and sharing of the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) with a consideration of data's 'people and purpose dimensions' (Taitingfong et al., 2024, 82). As an acronym, CARE consists of the following components: Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, Ethics. Each of these has subcomponents; the subcomponents of Responsibility, for example, are 'For expanding capability and capacity', 'For positive relationships', and 'For Indigenous languages and worldviews' (Carroll, 2020, Fig. 2).



Provenance labels for indigenous cultural materials (https://localcontexts.org/labels/traditional-knowledge-labels/)

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other open research practices in Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

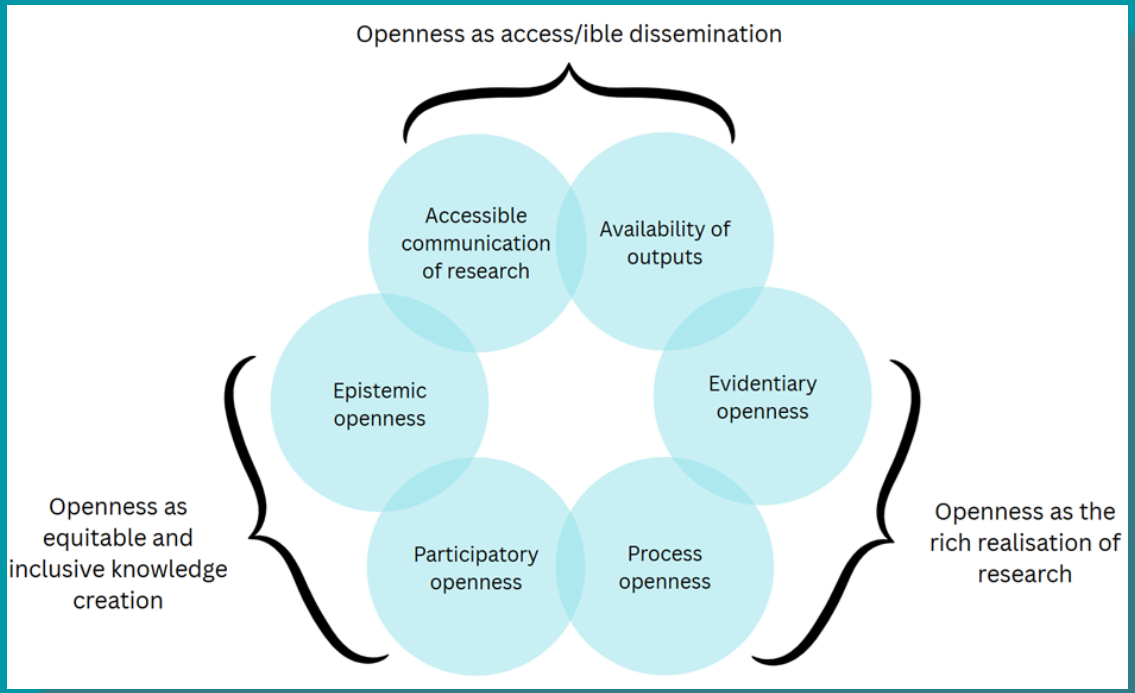
EXAMPLES

Situating the MORPHSS typology relative to the UNESCO model

The MORPHSS typology and the UNESCO model



Reframes '*open dialogue with other knowledge systems*' & '*open engagement of societal actors*' & populates with AHSS-relevant practices



More fully emphasises important AHSS work around public scholarship; pluralises what 'open outputs' means

Seeks a more inclusive and accommodating framework for 'open scientific knowledge' - e.g. the diversity of ways of sharing research evidence

Find out more



Our website: https://morphss.hcommons.org/

MORPHSS Catalogue:
https://catalogue.morphss.work/

MORPHSS Report:
https://doi.org/10.17613/jn1y1-mj246

Preprint documenting initial MORPHSS findings:
https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.178353.1

Follow us on BlueSky: @morphss.bsky.social

Thank you for listening!

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