URA

Researcher Educator
Evaluator Networker
Infrastructure Developer
Entrepreneur Debater
Advisor "Midwife"

Utilisation Role Analysis

In order to go from the creation of new knowledge to it having an impact in society, many roles are needed in the innovation process. Some of them are seldom discussed, but they are nevertheless very important in order to be able to create value in society. Find your role and make it count!

What roles exist?

The most common roles in the utilisation or innovation process are as follows: researcher, educator, advisor, networker, infrastructure developer, debater, "midwife", evaluator or entrepreneur. The roles should not be seen to be mutually exclusive, and a researcher might assume multiple roles, depending on the context.

However, it is more likely that, based on personal characteristics and experiences, you will choose to develop certain roles more than others. The roles are also interconnected, so that the strength in one role may enhance another, but the knowledge and skills needed for each role are still distinct.

USE IT WHEN

- Thinking about your own research **career**
- Considering how many roles you can take on at the same **time**
- Planning to **recruit** a new person to the research group
- Developing an innovation **strategy** and considering who should be doing what
- Developing an **action** plan for the research group
- Reporting research utilisation to **funding** agencies or the **university**
- **Applying** for research funding and thinking about what to write in the utilisation or knowledge transfer section
- Thinking about what role you want to take on in a**specific** innovation process and what roles others need to take on

HOW TO PERFORM AN ANALYSIS

What is a Utilisation Role Analysis?

A utilisation role analysis is a tool that aims to help individual researchers and research groups to identify the innovation processes in which they participate and what roles they take on. Such an analysis is an excellent part of an innovation strategy planning process.

The best way to perform a URA is to start by filling in the URA Questionnaire yourself and reflecting upon the results. Next you should ask your colleagues in your research team to do the same, after which you can discuss the results together. Given your plans for the group and the current workload, is the distribution of roles adequate and appropriate?

What does the URA questionnaire consist of?

The questionnaire consists of short descriptions for each of the nine roles. For each role you can indicate whether or not you take on that particular role at present, and what the trend is in terms of the likelihood that you will need to perform that role more or less or to the same extent in the future. This provides you with a good opportunity to reflect over whether you find the current situation to be satisfactory or if you want to move in another direction, for example by taking on a new role or by dropping an existing role.

Can the URA be a part of the departmental planning process?

The thinking behind the roles in terms of making a broad spectrum of utilisation processes visible can be applied in other settings as well. At the Department of Energy & Environment at Chalmers, the URA has been used to form the basis for the utilisation strategy in the operational plans for the department. According to Henriette Söderberg, Head of Department, this was a deliberate choice:

We have put a lot of effort into developing our own utilisation objectives whereby we have based those objectives on a broad sense of what utilisation of research actually is. By focusing on each co---worker we want to make visible what has already been done, but in a more structured way.

What research lies behind the development of URA?

Scientists Staffan Jacobsson, Eugenia Perez Vico and Hans Hellsmark et al, through extensive literature studies and interviews with researchers at both Chalmers and SP Technical Research Institute of Sweden, have identified a number of roles that can be adopted within research and innovation work. Their research has formed the basis for the URA tool. For more detailed information, please contact Eugenia Perez Vico (eugenia.perez@chalmers.se) or Hans Hellsmark (hans.hellsmark@sp.se).