



# Practice-based research



**Professor Christos Vasilakis**  
Professor of Management Science  
School of Management





## What is practice-based research?

Practice-based research is situated in practice, with a non-academic partner, and addresses research that has practical relevance to the partner.

## How I use this method of engagement in my research

As a researcher I'm primarily motivated by addressing real-life problems, and that means I have to be where practical problems are generated and exist. In my case this is hospitals and other care delivery organisations.

I go to hospitals, and healthcare events, and try to meet people I could work with. Our initial interaction is usually based on their identifying a problem that I could help with. I then form a project team (often comprising researchers from across disciplines, clinicians, managers and service users) to scope the problem.

To collect data, I undertake observations of practitioners at work, with the research problem shaping what's observed. I then look to bring different practitioners together, eliciting information from them through problem-structuring methods.

Having collected the data, I present it back to the project team, seeking their input on what might be missing, potential next steps, or how study aims and objectives might be refined.

### My research

My research explores how mathematical modelling and computer simulation methods can help address healthcare delivery problems.



## Other types of engagement I'm interested in

I got involved in the Public Engagement Unit's *Expressions of Research* project, through which I was matched with an artist, Andrew Henon, who explained my research through art. It helped me and my research team to bring the human dimension back into our work.

I was working on a project looking into the management of blood supplies in the context of a mass casualty event, and Andrew, being an artist, straight away picked up on the human dimension of a mass casualty event, and the blood. For me it was just a process map of how blood is stored and used, and then different ways of organising this store, and processing and distribution. I'd forgotten about the human dimension and drama of a mass casualty event, and Andrew brought this back into focus.

## How public engagement benefits me

My public engagement work has improved my consultancy skills. Although I'm not a consultant per se, I do need to make people understand what I do very quickly, so that they can decide whether they want to be part of the research or not, or even to fund it. Public engagement has definitely improved my ability to explain quickly what I do and how this can benefit potential partners and funders.

Public engagement also helps with impact. The co-creation inherent to my research means that practitioners feel ownership over the end products. Consequently, my research outcomes are more likely to impact upon their work.

