Beyond Research: Creative Arts in the Impact, Engagement and Innovative Agenda

Lessons to be learned from elsewhere

DDCA conference, Melbourne
Professor Paul Gough RMIT
September 2017
Impact and its causes...
... shift to matters of public accountability and value-for-money ... focus on the relevance and value of publicly funded research for society and the economy.

... the definition of research has changed, from being defined as “original investigation undertaking in order to gain knowledge and understanding” (RAE 2001 & 2008) to “a process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared” (REF 2014)
The Impact and Future of Arts and Humanities Research

Paul Benneworth, Magnus Gulbrandsen and Ellen Hazelkorn
Arts and humanities play an important role in underpinning the formation of new ideas, contributing to culture and identity, encouraging creativity and innovation, enhancing civil society and underpinning democracy, with implications for society and individuals. They “contribute to a growing body of knowledge on human experience, agency, identity and expression ... (p.164)

[We are now] ...in a policy environment in which public value has come to be interpreted as “better meet[ing] society’s needs”, the Arts & Humanities are “looking for ways to explain their value”... (Ruark, 2011, p.166)
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“I promise you, folks can make a lot more, potentially, with skilled manufacturing or the trades than they might with an art history degree” [Barack Obama]

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Impact beyond academia

Why?
- Government agendas
- Public scrutiny
- University strategies
- Research funding expectations

When?
- RQF 2006-08...
- REF UK 2014
- ERA
Impact: from input to outputs

Types of impact
- conceptual
- instrumental
- capacity building

Pathways to impact
- academic
- economic and social

Public value, benefit and engagement
Impact and the REF – UK 2014

Our starting point is that an excellent submission should provide a portfolio of excellent research and build on excellent research to deliver strong benefits to the economy and society.

The impact has to represent an identifiable benefit to or positive influence on the economy, society, public policy or services, culture, the environment or quality of life beyond academia. Dissemination without identifiable impact is ineligible.
Challenges of assessing impact

- Time lags
- Attribution
- Ensuring the quality of underpinning research
- Corroboration
- Diverse range of impacts across the spectrum of disciplines
- Burden – on institutions and users
- Recruiting user representatives across all panels
Impact is more than engagement

Types of impact:
- Economic
- Quality of life
- Social
- Public policy
- Environment
- Cultural
- Health
Principles of assessing impact

- Impact must be built on high quality research
- Impact from curiosity-driven and long term research as well as work with more immediate application
- Impacts that are visible during the assessment period: the underpinning research could have taken place 10 to 15 years ago
- Showcasing the success of research in contributing to the economy and society
Lessons from the pilot

- Universities with strong ERA records in a particular field of research did not necessarily do well in the corresponding impact/engagement pilot – and *visa versa*; some Universities with ERA2 did very well in the impact pilot, scoring ‘mature’ (3/3).

- This suggests that researchers who are good at producing ‘research excellence’ might be different to those who are good at producing ‘research engagement/impact’?

Perhaps we should encourage practice-based/community-based researchers towards engagement/impact metrics rather than (only) towards NTROs/excellence?
Lessons from the pilot

• Impact – based as it is in ERA currently upon a qualitative narrative account – is more universally applicable across disciplines than the way engagement is currently set up, which favours STEM over HASS. We will need to have HASS-suitable indicators of engagement, as the current ones are biased towards STEM.

- Impact upon ‘society’ is often an aggregate of many disciplines, across many interventions, and it is difficult to apportion. Therefore, an alternative approach that is less discipline-based and more based upon the institutional support that Universities provide to facilitate impact and engagement might be a promising direction for this issue to take?
Lessons from the pilot

- Appears to be based strongly upon research income, which is very skewed across disciplines. Despite attempts to benchmark by discipline, this leaves many sources of bias in estimates of engagement.
- End users are poorly defined. Do they include the general public? If so in what capacity?
- An expectation that any metrics for engagement must be drawn from sources of data that are already collected routinely and reliably and that they cannot be ‘gamed’ easily.
- In-kind – at least in ARC Linkage grants – seems to fit these requirements, and should perhaps be included?
- Why isn’t the role of research in shifting culture included? (It is in the UK REF etc)
A practice-based design research output, with its path to dissemination, engagement and impact *beyond* academia

1 Portable Bicycle Stand Design
A flexible wall construction that can accommodate a range of bicycle sizes & types

2 Research Design Question:
drew on observational research and tests with users to find an applied solution

3 Research was based on previous work in innovative application of plastics; it had a track record of patents and registered designs

4 The design solution exploited the material characteristics of compression-moulded recycled plastic;

5 The research program was co-developed with company, as part of $180K government funded knowledge transfer partnership

6 Launched to market; featured in popular and trade press; cited on sites listing products for cyclists… it had commercial and professional user *impact*

Practice-based project - *design*
A practice-based designed locative media research output, with a record of its path to dissemination, engagement and impact beyond academia (thanks to Dr Charlotte Crofts UWE Bristol)

1 Locative media technologies
Visitors use their mobile handset at a heritage working cinema to trigger interactive site specific media content

2 Cultural impact: informs heritage policy in the UK; how visitors impact on similar archives, museums, galleries

3 Economic impact: the research increased visitors to the cinema and the collection; direct financial benefits for cinema and local economy

4 Social impact: it encourages local community to consider its past; take pride in cinema heritage and local attractions

5 Educational impact: enhancing curriculum development across theory and practice modules; feed to research centre’s remit;

6 Tracked through ticket sales, evaluative feedback questionnaire, letters of corroboration from cinema and heritage sites…

The innovative application of mobile technologies in a heritage context – The Curzon Cinema
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process scale</th>
<th>Knowledge process</th>
<th>Conceptual framework for understanding “value”</th>
<th>Value determination process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Co-creation of new knowledge</td>
<td>The societal analogue for scientific excellence, directly related to individual research projects—measures of “goodness”</td>
<td>Are researchers making their findings as accessible as possible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Knowledge exploitation/transfer</td>
<td>Users taking knowledge and research from researchers and embedding it in their own products, processes and techniques</td>
<td>Is there evidence that users are engaging/exploiting findings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>Embodiment in network behaviour</td>
<td>Maximising incentives for creating public benefits from private activities, via autonomy and accountability</td>
<td>Are the findings disseminating and exploited via networks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Becomes knowledge commons</td>
<td>Creating and empowering societal capacities to live a “good life”, particularly outside direct economic sphere</td>
<td>Are networks changing in ways that promote a “better” society?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Multi-scalar model of research creating public value
Adapted from Benneworth et al (2016)
A case study approach

• **Identifying** the research;
• **Interviewing** to discuss the impact and engagement activities that have resulted from your research.
• **Using** the Impact Indicators and Engagement Activities document to map the activities
• **Addressing** these questions:
• What are the research questions that motivated your research? Can you tell us about the challenges or problems your research sought to address?

• Drawing in specific projects can you share with us the social, industry or economic issues or challenges that you feel address your research addresses?

• What steps did you take to address these issues? Tell us about the programs of work you undertook?

• **Who** did you work with – beyond academic – to help address these issues? Which partners/stakeholders/end users did you work with, when, and how have they been involved?
• To date, what are the major outcomes of the project? Can you see links between the questions and aims that motivated you in your research program and tangible outcomes in how we have shaped policy, society, economy, health and/or the ways in which we understand our world?

• What did you do to translate your research work?

• Can you tell us about the tangible impact or implications for industry, policy, or society, economy? Can you point to any collaborators – beyond academia – who might provide corroborating evidence for us?

• How are and/or could these findings be used?

• What ‘evidence’ do you have about your/the project’s research impact? What support would you need in gathering such a body of material by way of corroboration or ‘evidence’?
Thank you