Studies

(2013-14) *Innovative Methods for Configurative Capture of the Cultural Value of Arts and Humanities Research.* AHRC


Four steps

1. The rise of “impact”: policy direction, shift in research evaluation and wide-ranging organisational responses
2. Narratives of impact: subject diversity and narrative construction of impact
3. Networks of impact: relational spaces and vocabularies
4. A textured notion of research impact
1. A GRUDGING CONSENSUS?
Public policy themes - the contributions of HE

– public accountability
– wealth creation in a “knowledge and innovation” economy
– participation and social equity
– user relevance; connections between academic and non-academic contexts
– evidence-informed decision-making

• But: performance-based funding, concentration, and accountability for academic and non-academic impact
  – conditional professional autonomy and self-regulation
  – diverted by technicalities?

(c) Oancea 2006, 2007
RAE/REF

• “‘Research’ for the purpose of the RAE is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding” (Guidance for Submissions, RAE 2008 and 2001)

• “For the purposes of the REF, research will be defined as ‘a process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared’” (Guidance for Submissions, REF 2014)
Organisational recalibration for impact performance

- Structures, roles, academic careers
- Impact ‘industry’
- Proliferation of tools and metrics
- Specialisation and procedural expertise (Oancea, 2007)
# Levels of research assessment and the ascension of procedural expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Purposes/ rationale</th>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Strategies &amp; procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supra-organisational</td>
<td>international, national, multidisciplinary and disciplinary</td>
<td>policy and strategic decisions; resource allocation; field identity and status</td>
<td>international organisations, professional associations, funding bodies</td>
<td>economic metrics, bibliometrics, expert descriptions, scenarios, peer review systems, consensus conferences, consultation, public debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational</td>
<td>organisations, research units, programmes</td>
<td>allocation of funds within organisations; management decisions; human resources decisions; organisational identity, competitiveness and prestige</td>
<td>national strategic bodies; funding bodies; quality assurance and audit bodies; professional evaluators; management; external evaluators; public; media</td>
<td>rating; peer review; bibliometrics; economic metrics; international standards; accreditation; impact studies; benchmarking; case studies; audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-organisational</td>
<td>teams, individuals, projects, outputs, and outcomes</td>
<td>access to funds; publication; career and professional status; awards and recognition; decisions on: implementation, follow-up, dissemination, reviewing etc.</td>
<td>peers; human resources departments; management bodies; professional associations; grant awarding bodies; editors and referees; users and partners; public, media</td>
<td>peer review; interviews; case studies; network studies; bibliometrics; altmetrics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) Oancea 2007
2. NARRATIVES OF IMPACT
Narratives of impact: arts and humanities

Anchors:

• Disciplines and traditions of inquiry and practice
• Cultural value, outreach, educational value, recreational and commercial value, public engagement
• Collective processes
• Creative practice

Concerns:

The most valuable bit was probably those small conversations that nobody saw and that nobody would remember properly or acknowledge, so very difficult to demonstrate in terms of impact (humanities interview).

It’s not really the impact of one individual; it’s the impact of the whole field, and hundreds and hundreds of people, from all different parts of the world, working on this problem. (humanities interview)
Narratives of impact: social sciences

Anchors:
- Interdisciplinarity
- Types and modes of research
- Policy, educational engagement, methodological transfer, public influence, visibility and exploitation.
- User engagement and co-construction.

Concerns:
Forget the new buzz-word about impact – if you were talking to me a decade, or even two decades ago, I would have said the most important thing for my research is, does it have an impact on policy, which in turn has an impact on people, or on the well-being of people. That’s what my research is about. (social sciences interview)

(c) Alis Oancea, 2011
Narratives of impact: theoretical sciences

Anchors:
• Contributions of non-applied research to the general stock of disciplinary and generic knowledge
• Communicating passion
• Transferring methods and techniques

Concerns:
In [this field of] research there is NO immediate commercial impact. But we don’t have the luxury of astronomy or astronomers, where they can make ANY picture of the galaxy look quite fascinating. There’s always the public interest, right? So this is how we fall between the two extremes: the attraction of science for science’s sake, and commercialisation. (theoretical science interview).
Narrative construction of CS

• **Plot construction**
  a) Climactic
  b) Headline
  c) Key examples
  d) Chronological

• **Plot elements**
  – Research/ trials → impact → recognition
  – Research → innovation → application → commercial success
  – Development → spinout → research → growth → success
  – Problem → research → dissemination → users
  – Demand → research → impact claim → reach and significance → secondary impact
  – Institution → research → impact claim → engagement activity → outcome indicators

Oancea and Djeramovic, 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of corroboration source</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Testimonials</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print and broadcast media</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital and social media</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International organisations and supranational agencies documentation</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent academic and professional publication</td>
<td>5.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional bodies and societies documents</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other UK national public bodies incl. RCUK</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry documents and publications</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK national and local government documents</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third sector documents</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and culture organisations publications</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign governments and bodies</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational and training material</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary documents</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documents relating to spinouts</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS researcher-produced sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research websites</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Award information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web and altmetrics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical trials</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Court case reports</td>
<td></td>
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(c) Oancea and Djerasimovic, 2015
Making a case...

• “For the purposes of, for instance, my impact case study, we measured [impact] according to the criteria by counting the reviews, itemising all the different stakeholders, showing how it had informed lots of television programmes and showing that it had actually influenced [...] policy”

• “But we have to just be careful that we don't then become prisoners of those metrics.”
Public Value

Jonathan Bate (2011)
“There is something especially inappropriate about the attempt to quantify the ‘value’ and ‘impact’ of work in the humanities in economic terms, since the very nature of the humanities is to address the messy, debatable and unquantifiable but essentially human dimensions of life such as history, beauty, imagination, faith, truth, goodness, justice and freedom”

John Brewer (2013)
“Making people aware of themselves as comprising a society helps in the development and dissemination of key social values that render society possible – cultural values like trust, altruism, tolerance, compromise, social solidarity and sense of belonging – and assists in society’s ongoing betterment and improvement”
A different vocabulary

Understanding Culture

Creating Culture

Living Culture

Poetics

Praxis

Poiesis

Enrichment and transformation

Meanings, expression, narratives and practices

Engagement and criticality

Connectedness and rootedness

Oancea, Florez and Atkinson, 2015
A different vocabulary

**Personal and interactional enrichment and transformation:** personal growth and well-being - being and becoming human; self knowledge and expression; depth of thinking and “widening of intellectual horizons”; release, coping, healing and exhilaration; enjoyment and pleasure; making sense of human action and experience in different material, social and cultural environments.

**Connectedness and rootedness:** (social and cultural) interpretation, understanding and empathy; social cohesion, sense of connection, belonging and security; sustaining the links with the past and with place; appreciation of cultural identities; recovering past or marginalised material and historical value.

**Engagement and criticality:** aesthetic experiences, expression and appreciation; (cultural access), engagement, and participation; (cultural) rights, social change, voice and resistance; productive engagement with cultural industries; making marginalised or silenced identities visible and vocal; motivating dialogue and understanding of difference.
3. NETWORKS OF IMPACT: RELATIONAL SPACES
The relational space for impact and value

Qualitative network analysis

• Nodes

• Relationships: direct/ indirect

• Flows:
  - direction: univocal; reciprocal; undetermined
  - content: information, human resources, physical resources
  - intensity: weak; moderate; strong; negative
[Network diagrams removed from slides for anonymisation]
4. A TEXTURED MODEL
A textured concept of research impact

Connectedness

Visibility

Application and use

Individual, community and societal benefits

Diffusion

Scope

Attribution

Beneficiaries and enablers

Users and mediators

Audiences and promoters

Partners

(c) Alis Oancea, 2011
• Technically refined measures, but pitched at the right level, to catalyse, rather than destabilize, research

• Healthy ecology of higher education
  – intellectual autonomy
  – financial sustainability
  – insightful governance

• Otherwise, high-stakes assessment simply captures assessment-driven hyperactivity
Some publications


