

***Beyond Research: Creative Arts in  
the Impact,  
Engagement and Innovative Agenda***  
**Lessons to be learned from elsewhere**

DDCA conference, Melbourne  
Professor Paul Gough RMIT  
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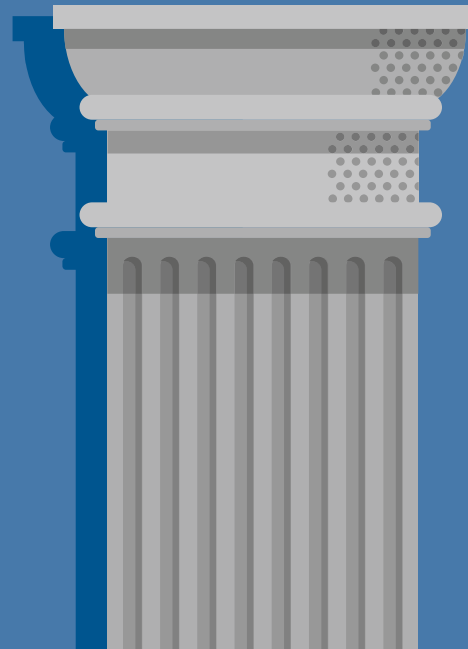
Impact and its causes...

... 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 )

Paul Benneworth, Magnus Gulbrandsen  
and Ellen Hazelkorn

# The Impact and Future of Arts and Humanities Research



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

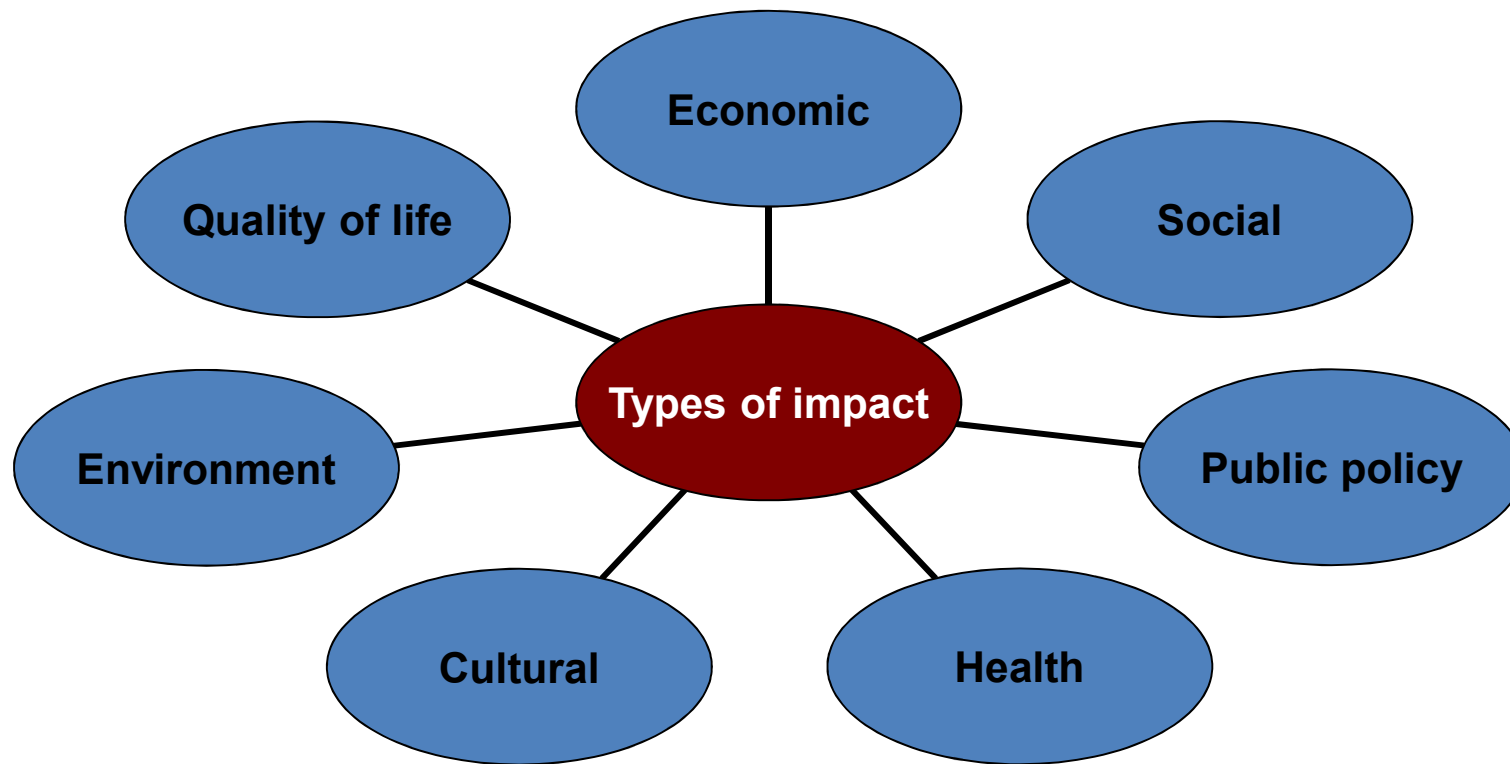
The impact has to represent an *identifiable benefit to or positive influence* on the economy, society, public policy or services, culture, the environment or quality of life beyond academia. Dissemination without identifiable impact is ineligible.



# 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



# 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?

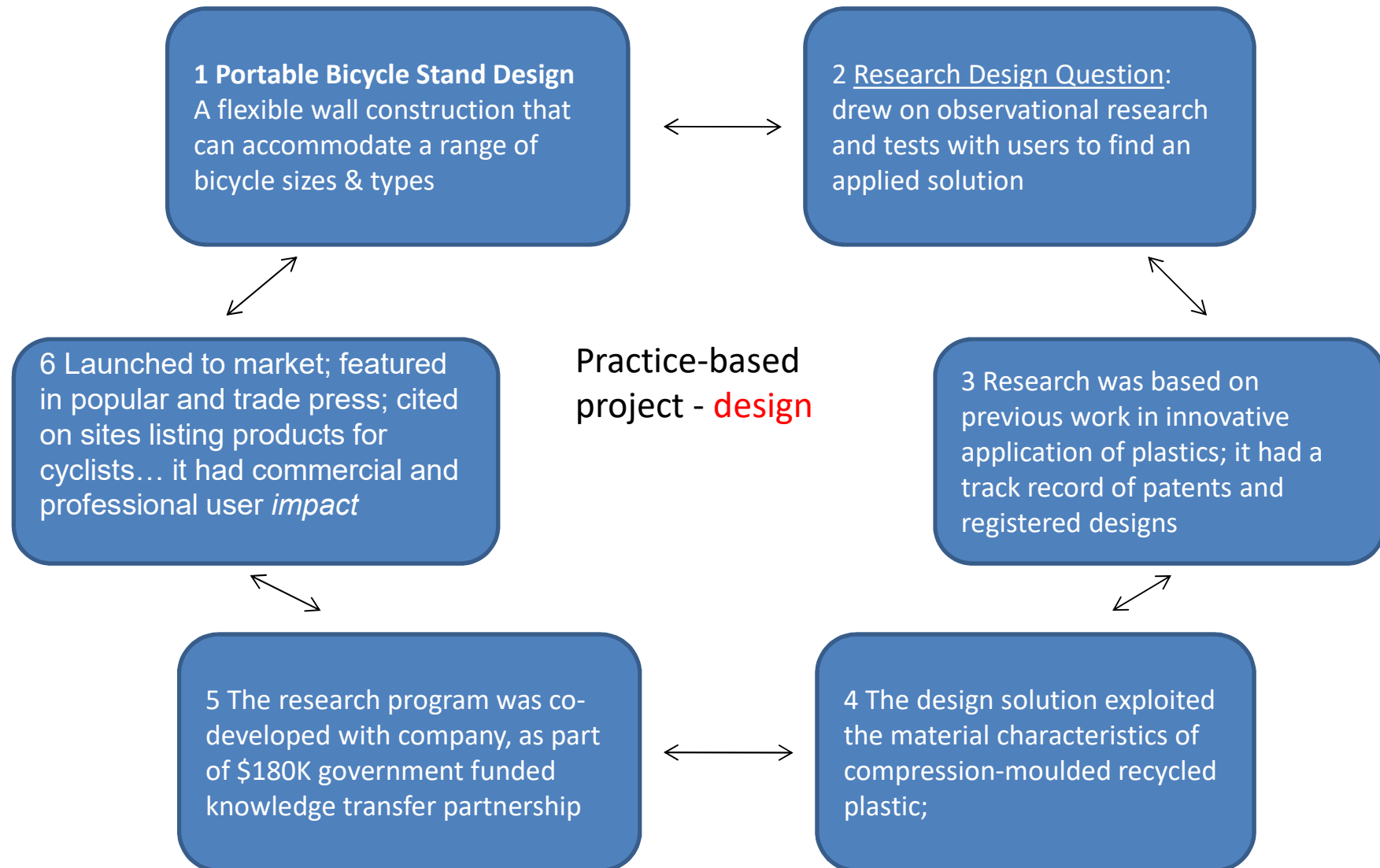
# Lessons from the pilot

- 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)



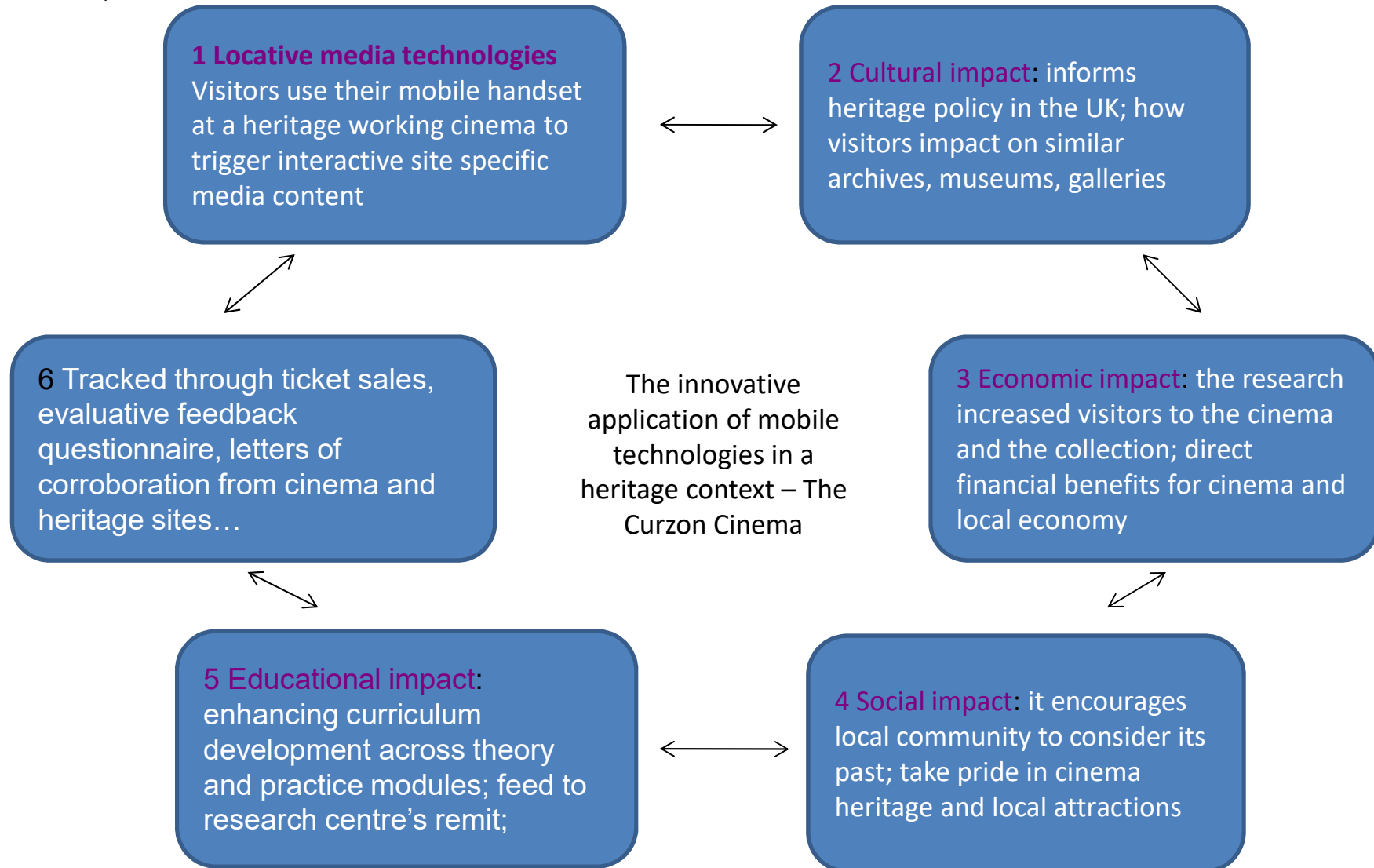


A practice-based design research output, with its path to dissemination, engagement and impact *beyond* academia





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)



Process scale	Knowledge process	Conceptual framework for understanding “value”	Value determination process
Individual	Co-creation of new knowledge	The societal analogue for scientific excellence, directly related to individual research projects—measures of “goodness”	Are researchers making their findings as accessible as possible?
Micro	Knowledge exploitation/transfer	Users taking knowledge and research from researchers and embedding it in their own products, processes and techniques	Is there evidence that users are engaging/exploiting findings?
Meso	Embodiment in network behaviour	Maximising incentives for creating public benefits from private activities, via autonomy and accountability	Are the findings disseminating and exploited via networks?
Macro	Becomes knowledge commons	Creating and empowering societal capacities to live a “good life”, particularly outside direct economic sphere	Are networks changing in ways that promote a “better” society?

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**