

**Impact and Knowledge Exchange in an Evolving Research  
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# What was I thinking?!

## Being an academic in the age of impact

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# An introduction, and ... what on earth is 'cultural policy studies'?

- An interest in the politics of cultural policy making through the analysis of the discursive formation around justifications of public funding for the arts and culture
- Years spent exploring the central role of the notion of the 'socio-economic impact' of the arts in policy rhetoric and the problem of 'value'
- The rise of the impact agenda in HE
- My very personal 'impact moral dilemma'

# The relation of research to policy and practice

**Cultural policy research and its myth of origin:**

(or, in other words: what is a safe distance from the spheres of policy-making and practice?)

**The Bennett vs. McGuigan paradigm**

(or 'useful culture' vs. the primacy of critique)

**PS: kindly make sure to choose your camp!**

# Academic anxieties...

## The hired hand vs. the purist academic dilemma

**“... what the cultural sector really wants from research is the killer evidence that will release dizzying amounts of money into the sector. Its expectations of research can be unrealistic” (Scullion and Garcia 2005).**

# On the naivety of the ‘speaking truth to power’ idea:

- There is no single truth to be spoken...
- Academics don’t and can’t sit outside of power relations looking in...
- The complication of the impact agenda (which reinforces the idea of an *external force impacting* on something)

# Why engage if you're useless?

**James Dyson on the Times (2012):**

**Britons “don't choose the difficult, hard work, of science and technology and engineering...**

**... we should push engineering and more technology so that “little Angelina wanting to go off to study French lesbian poetry will suddenly realise that things like keeping an aircraft industry, developing nuclear energy, high-speed trains, all these things are important”.**

If you can't beat them, JOIN THEM!  
(or simply speak like them...)

*From AHRC's **Leading the World: The economic impact of UK arts and humanities research (2009):***

... for every **£1** spent on research by the AHRC, the nation may derive as much as **£10** of immediate benefit and another **£15-£20** of long-term benefit. Thus in 2006-7, the AHRC invested **£60.3 million** in new research, which implies immediate returns of over **£616.9 million** and a possible additional return over 25 years of around **£1 billion**.

# ‘Impact’ is about BIG questions:

- Impact asks what is the demonstrable value of research but also what is the role of universities in society?
- What do university contribute to civic society?
- Who and what is research for? (and who decides?)
- What comes after critique?
- For cultural policy studies in particular: what is the ideal relationship between scholarly work and the policy sphere?



# A more personal take:

**The public engagement and impact agenda has forced me to ask key questions:**

- What kind of academic am I?
- What kind of academic should I be?
- How would I articulate the broader value of what I do?
- Making sense of the seeming paradox of an ‘impact champion’ whose scholarly reputation is based on years of critiquing and debunking the rhetoric of impact

# Cultural Intelligence : a way forward?

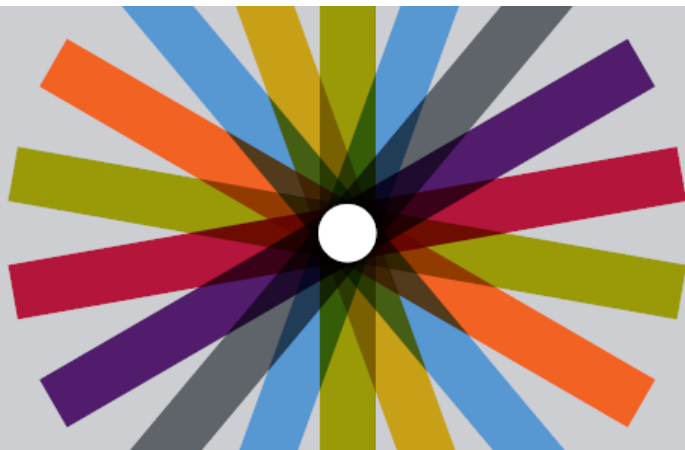
“I propose to conceptualize cultural intelligence as an orientation to knowledge and understanding which goes beyond cultural critique through **a practical engagement with complexity** [...]

[C]ultural intelligence involves the recognition that navigating complexity can never be a question of definitive or one size-size-fits-all ‘solutions’; a complex problem can only be addressed partially, through an ongoing and painstaking negotiation with its multiple aspects, the different ways in which it is perceived, and the divergent interests and perspectives involved”.

Is a solution getting our academic hands ‘dirty’?

## The Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value

“The aim of the Commissions is to make thought provoking contributions to the debate thereby assisting policymakers to find solutions to sometimes seemingly intractable problems”.



Enriching Britain:  
Culture, Creativity and Growth

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The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission  
on the Future of Cultural Value

# Why cultural value?

- \* The theme of cultural value and the question of its articulation and measurement key to cultural policy in the past 25 years
- \* Austerity, funding cuts and the need to 'make the case' for the value of arts & culture
- \* Overlaps between arts and creative industries and other areas of policy of growing prominence (e.g. tourism, education and skills, soft power, strategies for growth, etc.)
- \* A strong area of expertise within Warwick (CCPS, Sociology, Theatre Studies, Film & TV, Law, WBS, etc.)

# Commissioners



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WARWICK  
THE WARWICK COMMISSION



# Tackling the cultural value challenge collaboratively:

- Challenging the myth of the neutrality of policy and the linear research-policy nexus it presupposes
- Pushing the debate beyond the obsession with funding (simile of the ecosystem)
- Feeding critical perspectives into policy debates + asking the awkward questions
- Bringing a diverse range of expertise together as a way to develop fresh thinking
- **This can only ever be a collaborative effort!**

# The goals

- Shifting the public debate on the value of the arts and culture beyond advocacy – longer term aim
- Pushing the debate beyond the policy silos and turning into a genuinely public conversation
- Getting critique out there in the real world to do its job!
- Consolidating the impact of the ‘Warwick approach’ to developing cultural policy thinking
- Developing/Strengthening partnerships and collaborations of strategic value (to both Warwick and the cultural and creative sector)

# What has been achieved?

## **The Warwick Commission:**

- Bringing unequal access to cultural participation and cultural work to the top of the arts policy agenda
- Reinforcing the crucial connection between arts policy and education policy: the central importance of cultural education for all
- Getting ‘the great and the good’ to acknowledge issues of unequal access, lack of diversity and representativeness across the sector
- Informing the pre-general election debate around arts, education and creative industries policy
- Pledges from parties (and even cross-party consensus!)



# On navigating a middle ground between 'public value' and 'impact'

- 'Relevance' a more helpful notion than 'usefulness'
- Respecting professional expertise and creative practice as legitimate sources of insight and knowledge, alongside scholarly expertise
- Collaboration and partnership as a model of interaction conducive to better work:
  - Working WITH the sector, rather than ON or FOR the sector
- The ultimate goal: a new “culture of knowledge-based practice”

So, what was I thinking?!



# And why am I *\*still\** doing it?!

- Belief in the public value of research
- Critique is only the first step in the research process
- Facilitating the collaborative post-critique moment is an essential aspect of being a researcher
- Whilst some aspects of the impact agenda are questionable, the aspiration that research should make a real change in the world is not
- Requirement: mastering the art of ‘**acceptable compromise**’ (and learning to live with it)