Research impacts: networks and narratives

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Alis Oancea

University of Oxford

Studies

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

(2013-2015) *Knowledge Exchange in the Social Sciences*. HEIF.

(2009-10) *Review of the Impact of the Research Assessment Exercise 2008 on education departments in all countries of the UK*. BERA/UCET.

(2009-2011) *Interpretations and Practices of Impact across the Range of Disciplines*. HEIF.

(2009) *Quality Criteria for the Assessment of Education Research in Several Contexts of Assessment*. ESRC/TLRP.

(2004-2005) *Quality in Applied and Practice-Based Educational Research*. ESRC

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?

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

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

Procedural expertise
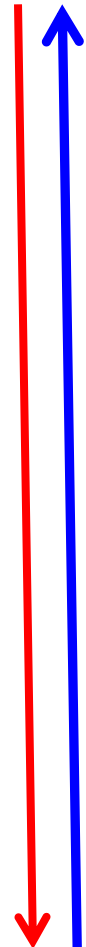
Substantive expertise

(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)

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).

Oancea and Djerasimovic, 2015

Narrative construction of CS

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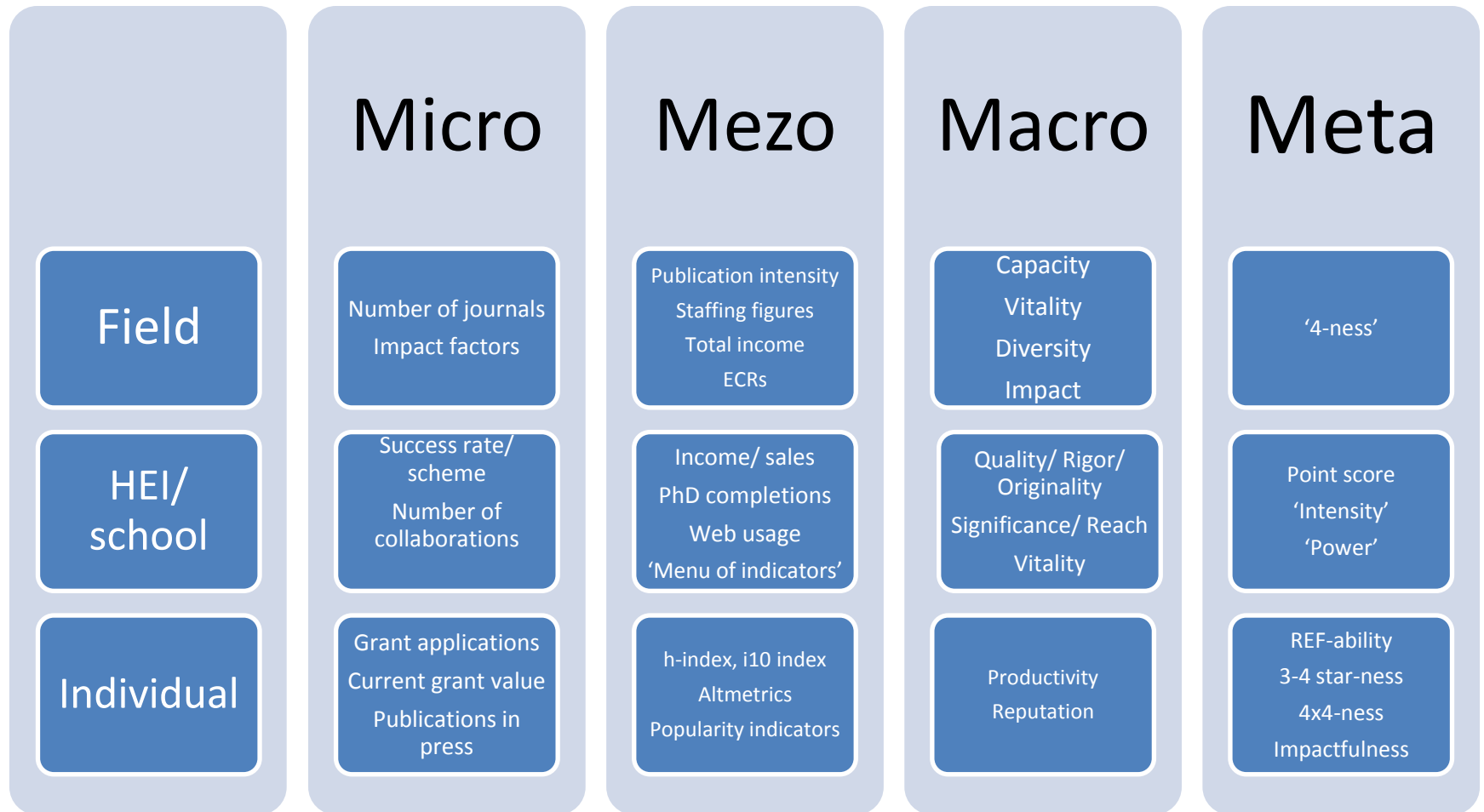 a) Climactic
  b) Headline
  c) Key examples
  d) Chronological

- **Plot elements**
  - Research/ trials → impact → recognition
  - Research →innovation → appplication → 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 Djerasimovic, 2015

Type of corroboration source	%
Testimonials	25.4
Print and broadcast media	12.5
Digital and social media	8.3
International organisations and supranational agencies documentation	5.4
Independent academic and professional publication	5.0
Professional bodies and societies documents	4.9
Other UK national public bodies incl. RCUK	4.7
Industry documents and publications	4.7
UK national and local government documents	4.4
Third sector documents	4.4
Art and culture organisations publications	3.9
Foreign governments and bodies	3.4
Educational and training material	2.6
Parliamentary documents	2.4
Documents relating to spinouts	2.0
CS researcher-produced sources	1.6
Research websites	1.4
Award information	1.1
Web and altmetrics	0.9
Clinical trials	0.7
Court case reports	

Vocabulary

|	Micro	Mezo	Macro	Meta
Field	Number of journals Impact factors	Publication intensity Staffing figures Total income ECRs	Capacity Vitality Diversity Impact	'4-ness'
HEI/ school	Success rate/ scheme Number of collaborations	Income/ sales PhD completions Web usage 'Menu of indicators'	Quality/ Rigor/ Originality Significance/ Reach Vitality	Point score 'Intensity' 'Power'
Individual	Grant applications Current grant value Publications in press	h-index, i10 index Altmetrics Popularity indicators	Productivity Reputation	REF-ability 3-4 star-ness 4x4-ness Impactfulness

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."
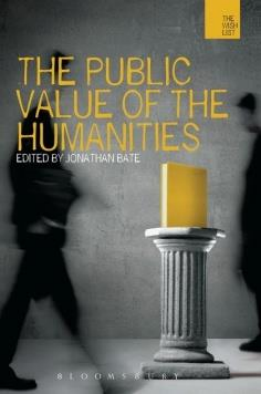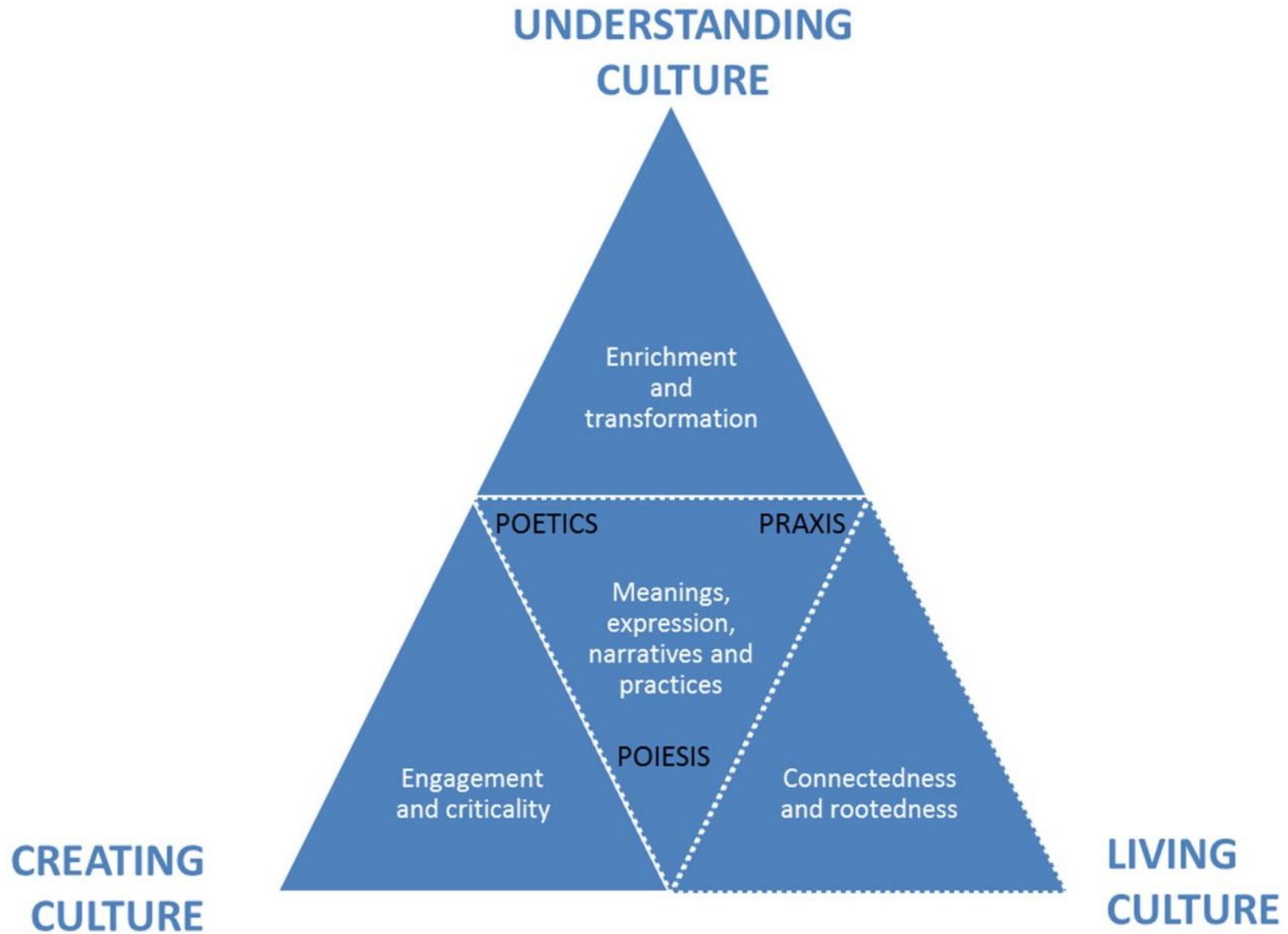
Public Value
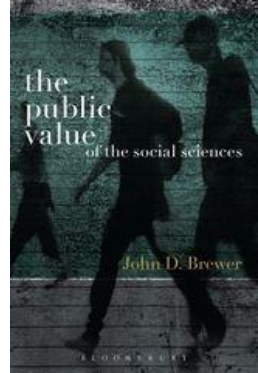
Jonathan Bate (2011) "There is something especially inappropriate about the attempt to quantify the 'value' and 'impact' of work in the humanities in economic terms, since the very nature of the humanities is to address the messy, debatable and unquantifiable but essentially human dimensions of life 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

Enrichment and transformation

POETICS   PRAXIS

Meanings, expression, narratives and practices

POIESIS

Engagement and criticality

Connectedness and rootedness

CREATING CULTURE

LIVING CULTURE

Oance, Florez and Atkinson, 2015

(c) Oancea, Florez and Atkinson, 2015

A different vocabulary

UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

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

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

...ess 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

CREATING CULTURE

Enga... and c...

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Oance, Florez and Atkinson, 2015

3. NETWORKS OF IMPACT: RELATIONAL SPACES

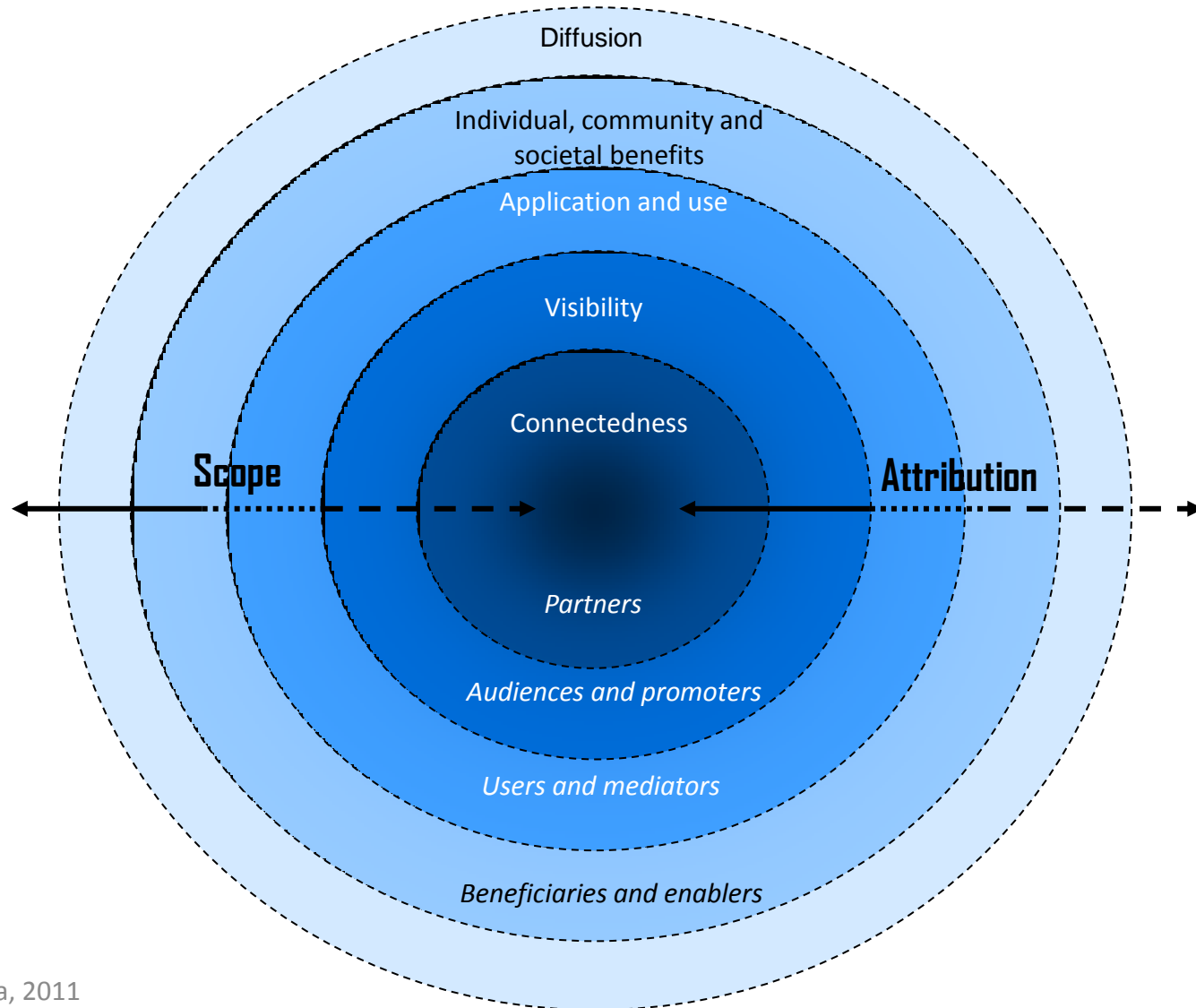# The relational space for impact and value

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

Diffusion

Individual, community and societal benefits

Application and use

Visibility

Connectedness

Scope

Attribution

Partners

Audiences and promoters

Users and mediators

Beneficiaries and enablers

- 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

Oancea, Florez and Atkinson (2015) The ecologies and economy of cultural value from research. *International Journal of Cultural Policy.* 10.1080/10286632.2015.1128418

Oancea (2014) Research assessment in the United Kingdom: past experience and current challenges. *ZfE - Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 23.

Oancea (2013) Interpretations of research impact in seven disciplines, *European Educational Research Journal*, 12(2), 242-250.

Oancea (2013) Buzzwords and values: The prominence of "impact" in UK research policy and governance. *Research Trends*, 33, 6-8

Ovseiko, Oancea and Buchan (2012) Assessing research impact in academic clinical medicine: a study using Research Excellence Framework pilot impact indicators. *BMC Health Services Research*, 12:478.

Oancea (2009) Performative accountability and the UK Research Assessment Exercise. *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies* (NZ), 27 (1 & 2).

Oancea (2007) From Procrustes to Proteus: Trends and practices in the assessment of education research. *International Journal for Research Methods in Education*, 30(3), pp. 243-269.

Oancea and Furlong (2007) Expressions of excellence and the assessment of applied and practice-based research. *Research Papers in Education*, 22(2), pp. 119–137.

Oancea (2007) Tailored suit or straitjacket? A framework for analysing research evaluation. *Scientific Bulletin*, Pitesti.

Oancea and Furlong (2007) *Assessing Quality in Applied and Practice-Based Research*. London: Routledge