

GENERATING IMPACT IN TRANSNATIONAL HUMANITIES RESEARCH: HERA 2009-2018

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HERA IMPACT CASE STUDIES

Innovation in humanities research demonstrated by HERA-funded projects leads to diversity in impact. Through contrasting processes and methods of engagement outside the academy, researchers have developed new ways of both conceiving and addressing research challenges that are central to realizing the European Research & Innovation agenda.

As examples, we identify five distinctive areas of HERA project impact and associated policy implications that create social, economic and cultural benefits for 'action' and 'reflection'. Pathways to impact are tied to specific project aims and target audiences.



IMPACT ON WELL-BEING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Example:

ARCTIC ENCOUNTERS (JRP II)

Investigated recent or emergent forms of tourism in the European High North, and assessed the cultural encounters they instantiate, the political implications of these encounters, and the environmental issues they raise; examined the relationship between tourism and contemporary verbal/visual representations of travel in travel writing, photography and film.

Methods and processes: Collaborations with the travel and tourism industry; awareness-raising talks as part of Arctic cruises; engagement with fishing companies.

Outcomes: Powerful environmental impact; raised awareness of the geo-politics of the Arctic region; impact on the travel industry, promoting responsible tourism and the development of a sustainable environment.

Policy implications: Work informed ecological and socially responsible approaches to tourism and the environment.



IMPACT THROUGH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Example:

CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN A TIME OF GLOBAL CONFLICT (JRP II)

Explored how the First World War created new spaces for, as well as put new pressures on, encounters between peoples and cultures from belligerent, colonised and politically neutral countries. Investigated the lasting consequences of these for social, cultural and literary memory in Europe.

Methods and processes: Comparative, interdisciplinary studies of archival documents, newspapers, journals, literary texts, book trade practices, films, photographs, paintings and sound-recordings.

Outcomes: Large-scale public engagement through the development of resources and infrastructure for different audiences to access knowledge, including collaborations with exhibitions, museums, festivals, and concert promoters. Public engagement led to increased social consciousness and awareness of the cultural complexity of global conflicts.

Policy implications: Influenced curatorial policies of military museums and informed NATO policies on conflict and the protection of monuments.



Helen Reeves: 18ct yellow gold spiral pendant with aquamarines

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Example:

CREATIVITY AND CRAFT PRODUCTION IN MIDDLE AND LATE BRONZE AGE EUROPE (JRP I)

Offered insights into the fundamental nature of creativity by exploring the nature and expression of creativity in material culture at a critical point in human history – the Bronze Age – during which many materials and object forms that we take for granted today were developed; explored the potential of prehistoric objects to stimulate creativity in the present.

Methods and processes: embedding 2-way knowledge exchange within the research so that non-academic partners (including SMEs) become co-producers of research; clear targeting of creative industry sectors through close partnership with key industry body (the Crafts Council) acting as broker, mediator and advisor.

Outcomes: Creativity in the past generated creativity in the present, resulting in new products and business opportunities; novel education and continuing professional development opportunities for creative practitioners; follow up survey outcomes indicate deep impact on individual businesses and creative practices several years after the project end.

Policy implications: Creation of structures that facilitate communication between industry bodies, businesses and academic researchers to allow experimentation that leads to economic impact.



IMPACT OF MEANING MAKING ACTIVITIES: UNDERSTANDING TANGIBLE & INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Example:

TRAVELLING TEXTS 1790-1914 (JRP II) & RHYTHM CHANGES (JRP I)

Travelling Texts studied women's participation in nineteenth-century literary culture by exploring what texts written by women were read where and by whom; Rhythm Changes examined the inherited traditions and practices of European jazz cultures. It was the first collaborative humanities project to explore the complexities of jazz as a transnational practice and its relationship with changing European identities.

Methods and processes: Transnational, historical and archival work on women authors (tangible) and jazz scenes (intangible); systematic study of reception data and representation; practice-led methods including collaborating with festivals to develop new creative content.

Outcomes: Public awareness of connecting the past with the present; celebration of the work of previously marginalized groups (women, artist collectives); knowledge exchange and public engagement events including exhibitions, performances, and digital resources.

Policy implications: Influenced the policy approaches of museums, festivals, and a national literature prize with regard to gender; understanding and recognition of the importance of music and its relationship to cultural heritage as a discursive field.



Photo: Jet Budekman

SOCIAL IMPACT AND CRITIQUE: CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEMOCRACY

Example:

DISENTANGLING EUROPEAN HIV/AIDS POLICIES (EUROPACH) (JRP III)

Investigates the extent to which, and terms under which, community groups and civil society representatives have influenced HIV/AIDS-related policies in Europe, as well as the ways in which these individuals and groups come to understand themselves in relation to earlier forms of policy negotiation and contestation.

Methods and processes: Analysis of HIV/AIDS policy frameworks to pull out underlying entangled logics from across Europe to understand how the past informs contemporary policies and concepts of citizenship; oral history interviews with persons involved in HIV/AIDS-related activism, policy implementation or policy negotiation; participant observation in spaces that make up HIV/AIDS-related 'policy worlds' (the practices and spaces where policies are observable as contested instruments of governance that enlist and generate categories of knowledge, webs of meaning and political subjects).

Outcomes: An interactive policy map tracking the entangled logics underlying various forms of criminalisation in relation to HIV/AIDS in Europe, including the criminalisation of migration, sex work and drug use; oral histories of HIV/AIDS activism; film; witness seminars; a new European HIV/AIDS Archive including interviews, policy-related instruments, artworks as materialized forms of knowledge, and reflective commentaries on HIV/AIDS policy worlds.

Policy implications: Analyses of existing citizenship models that are observable in relation to HIV/AIDS policy worlds in Europe inform the cataloguing of problems that arise in the landscape of European citizenship, and routes for improvement in terms of health, rights and responsibility; new directions for policy, care provision, activism and advocacy in the fields of health (especially HIV but also TB, Hepatitis and other STIs), migration, sex work and drug policy.



HERA

Humanities in the European Research Area

Historical, cultural, artistic and philosophical knowledge is indispensable for understanding humanity's past, for dealing with the key societal challenges of the present, and for imagining possible futures.

Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) is a network of national funding agencies committed to leading and developing funding opportunities for humanities researchers in Europe. Since its inception it has grown from 14 to 26 national agencies.

HERA's first thematic Joint Research Programme (JRP) was launched in 2009 (Cultural Dynamics: Inheritance and Identity; Humanities as a Source of Creativity and Innovation). This has been followed by two subsequent JRPs in 2012 (Cultural Encounters) and 2015 (Uses of the Past); a fourth starts in 2019 (Public Spaces: Culture and Integration in Europe). The HERA partners, together with the European Commission, have pooled €56 million to fund 55 transnational humanities-focused projects. These have supported 231 scholars, 206 postdoctoral researchers and 88 PhD students who have worked together with 173 associated partners, including business and industry, policy makers, museums, galleries, libraries and archives, media organisations, the education sector, journalists and writers groups, festivals and venues, military regiments, religious institutions, artist organisations and performing arts practitioners, heritage sites and historic buildings, activist groups, legal and financial institutions, professional societies, public sector institutions, voluntary and community groups, charitable organisations, and the general public.

PILLARS & CONFERENCE THEMES: Assessing Impact (Pillar 3)

KEYWORDS: Humanities; Impact; Innovation; Value; HERA.