GW4

bridging the gap

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bridging the Gap identified that realising the full benefits of Arts and Humanities research collaborations requires deeper consideration of research relationships as processes rather than just a means to an end. A processual approach demonstrates the potential role of Arts and Humanities research collaborations within a dynamic regional creative and cultural ecosystem in which both universities and their partners gain:

More diverse forms of educational offer and ongoing professional development for individuals (including academics), and by extension a stronger regional culture, civic society and economy

A regional network of institutions that can act as trusted critical friends and build shared platforms in response to adversity and opportunity

A mixture of easily measurable short-term beneficial impacts and long-term conceptual leadership in the field

TO REALISE THIS POTENTIAL, THOSE INVOLVED IN THESE PARTNERSHIPS SHOULD TAKE MEASURES (SEE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS) TO MOVE:

BETWEEN EXPERTISE AND SHARED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

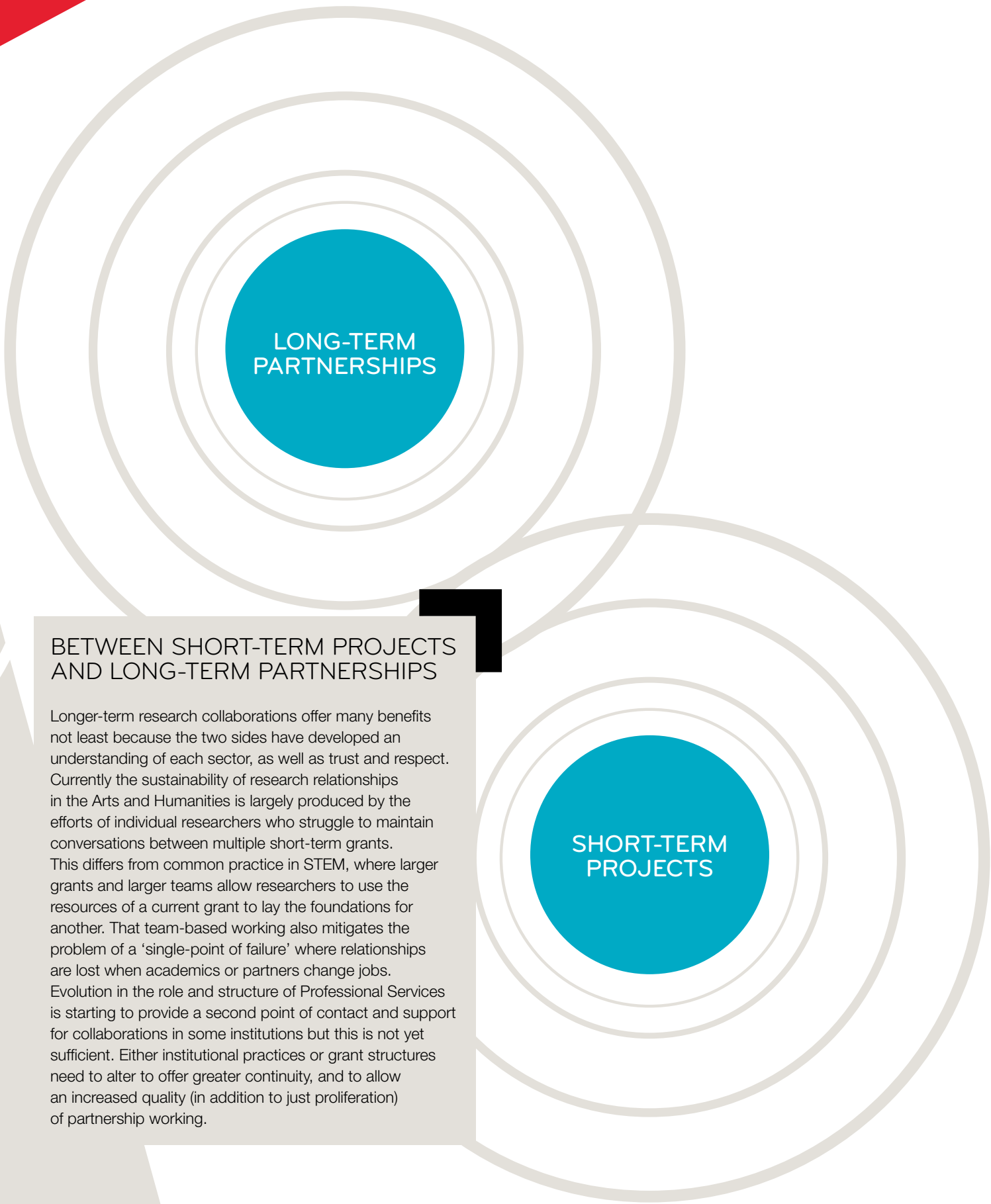
Our report reflects the findings of many practice-focused studies on research co-production: collaborations entail the re-organisation/redistribution of skills and knowledge across the partnerships. However, research-intensive universities such as those in GW4 haven't yet developed mechanisms that fully recognise the gains that accrue from participating in experiential learning with external partners. This is evidenced at multiple levels: at leadership level, universities haven't tended to recognise the potential of their strategic cultural partners to offer advice, and guidance and co-develop policy; at faculty level the skills developed in collaborative work aren't necessarily recognised in promotion criteria; at the level of individual academics, many still underestimate the resources and conceptual sophistication of their partners as well as the broader sets of skills and knowledge that both can bring to research relationships.

BETWEEN TRANSACTIONAL/ OBJECT-ORIENTED AND OPEN-ENDED/CURIOSITY-LED RESEARCH

The 'ecology' of collaboration requires a layering of relationships from transactional/consultancy to open-ended/co-produced, and a mix of short-term and longer-term projects. This spectrum needs to be better understood by all partners and funders, and flexible facilitation of dedicated researcher time for projects of different kinds and intensities would allow universities to match the diversity of research practices in partner organisations. There is a need for greater consideration of the value of more transactional and consultancy working by Arts and Humanities researchers, as part of this wider ecology, just as we also see the need to develop funding streams and mechanisms that enable longer-term, more open relationships.

BETWEEN INTER-INDIVIDUAL AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

One thing that we heard time and time again from creative economy and heritage partners is that universities are institutions that are difficult to understand from the outside. At one level they seem monolithic and are branded as a single institution, yet in practice they are often silo-ed and operate with little coordination. As a result, partners may be disappointed when they realise that the understanding that they have built up with one academic or research group doesn't 'carry' across the university. Similarly, partners are unlikely to perceive a difference between research-intensive universities and the post-1992 institutions, and to find the lack of co-operation or understanding between universities (in the wider context of the competition resulting from league tables and the marketization of higher education) baffling. Successful nurturing of the regional creative and cultural ecosystem requires diversity.



BETWEEN SHORT-TERM PROJECTS AND LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS

Longer-term research collaborations offer many benefits not least because the two sides have developed an understanding of each sector, as well as trust and respect. Currently the sustainability of research relationships in the Arts and Humanities is largely produced by the efforts of individual researchers who struggle to maintain conversations between multiple short-term grants. This differs from common practice in STEM, where larger grants and larger teams allow researchers to use the resources of a current grant to lay the foundations for another. That team-based working also mitigates the problem of a 'single-point of failure' where relationships are lost when academics or partners change jobs. Evolution in the role and structure of Professional Services is starting to provide a second point of contact and support for collaborations in some institutions but this is not yet sufficient. Either institutional practices or grant structures need to alter to offer greater continuity, and to allow an increased quality (in addition to just proliferation) of partnership working.

INTRODUCTION

Bridging the Gap was a year-long research project to explore the variety of practices of collaborative research in the Arts and Humanities at a regional scale in South-West England and South-East Wales. This regional approach offered the opportunity to bridge the scales of existing literature studying collaborative practice — or what is often called 'co-produced' research — which has tended to cluster at two different levels of analysis.[1] One takes individual research projects as its starting point: exploring practice and ethics, and working outwards towards the impact of institutional frameworks on research outcomes.[2] Another situates collaborative research within the higher education landscape — looking at how changes in policy on impact and engagement are affecting the sector as a whole.[3]

Our specific regional and disciplinary focus was a result of the interests of the funders of this research: the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the GW4, which brings together four research-intensive universities (Bath, Bristol, Cardiff, Exeter) in South-West England and South-East Wales. These four universities have a shared history of interest in Arts and Humanities collaborations with partners outside the academy, including through their participation in the UWE Bristol and Watershed-led REACT project (one of four AHRC-funded 'Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy') that ran between 2012 and 2016.[4] Our research traced how universities are imbricated in regional networks that support culture, heritage and creativity. It considered how those imbrications are producing personal change for researchers and institutional change for universities, what challenges and opportunities exist to furthering these networks of relationships, and how all these affect the perceived value of Arts and Humanities research.[5]

We explored these intersections and interdepencies through four different lenses, each led by academics from one of the four universities. Two of these strands worked with key sectors in the region: the Creative Economy (led by Anthony Mandal, Cardiff, with input from Simon Moreton and Jon Dovey, UWE Bristol) and the Heritage sector (led by Nicola Thomas, Exeter). The other two strands engaged with multi-disciplinary strengths in universities in the region: Modern Languages (led by Christina Horvath, Bath) and Environmental Humanities (led by Peter Coates and Marianna Dudley, Bristol). Across the project, Tim Cole (Bristol) and Elizabeth Haines (Project Research Associate) participated in all four strands and provided oversight of the project as a whole.

Our multi-stranded approach enabled us to ask the central question of how best to unlock the value of Arts and Humanities research within the region from two different starting points: outside and inside the academy. The Creative Economy and Heritage strands coalesced around sectors that are vibrant and research active but don't map directly onto traditional academic disciplines. How can bridges be formed that match disciplinary imperatives with interdisciplinary real-world issues? Conversely the Environmental Humanities and Modern Languages are fundamentally multi-disciplinary areas of scholarly activity. How does this affect their offering to external partners?

While different emphases emerged across the strands — and are found in the report's strand-specific sections — there were significant commonalities, which frame our overarching recommendations. Our findings are based on a mixture of workshop discussions and reflections (especially in the Heritage and Modern Languages strand), interviews with key stakeholders within and beyond the university (especially in the Creative Economy strand) and some experiments in new ways of working (especially in the Environmental Humanities strand). Our hope is that this report will help to bridge the gap between universities and their partners in the GW4 region and beyond to the mutual benefit of both and, by extension, wider society.

Across Bridging the Gap, we identified a wide variety of practices, contexts and goals in research collaborations. Typically literature on collaborative practices has focused on developing strong ethical principles which can mitigate the asymmetries in power and resources between researchers and say, voluntary organisations.[6] However, some external partners working with Arts and Humanities are as large as the National Trust or BBC. Equally, the most innovative results are often generated by collaborations where the boundaries between the expertise of academics and non-academic partners are 'dissolved'. We propose that co-produced research in the Arts and Humanities can be best considered as operating along four spectrums or axes.

Between expertise and shared experiential learning. A key question for Bridging the Gap was the role of subject-based knowledge in co-produced projects with external partners. What does 'expertise' look like in collaborations? It is important to differentiate between the uses of specialism and generalism in different collaborative contexts, but equally between knowledge and skill sets. In some projects, each partner brings a defined contribution. In others, skills are redistributed and redefined. This axis is particularly explored in the Modern Languages and Environmental Humanities strands.

Between transactional/object-oriented and open-ended/curiosity-led research. Bridging the Gap also addressed the nature of problem-solving in different kinds of collaborations. Partnerships sometimes coalesce around specific goals or outputs. Other research projects set out to reframe an issue or question in a more exploratory way. There are benefits to each, but Arts and Humanities scholars tend to be more used to the latter than the former. How does this affect research collaborations? This axis is particularly explored in the Creative Economy and Environmental Humanities strands.

Between inter-individual and inter-institutional relationships. Research in the Arts and Humanities still operates far more under a lone scholar model than in other faculties. As a result, collaborative research relationships also tend to lean on single-points of failure. Simultaneously, however, universities are setting up 'strategic relationships' with large cultural and creative partners. What do these differences incur? This axis is particularly explored in the Creative Economy and Heritage strand.

Between short-term projects and long-term partnerships. The capacity to respond to particular kinds of queries is shaped by how funding is delivered. What opportunities are offered by each of these kinds of collaboration? How can research be agile enough to respond to fluctuating environments of opportunity and adversity? How can partnerships be deepened and strengthened? How can universities and cultural organisations provide mutually beneficial advisory and strategic support for each other? This axis is particularly explored in the Creative Economy and Environmental Humanities strand.

CREATIVE ECONOMY

Over recent years, it has become evident that the creative sector is of rapidly growing importance to UK society and economy.[7] Creative industries and the wider creative economy - from museums, art centres and galleries, to computer games developers, designers, dancers, visual artists and beyond - represent a particularly significant portion of the economy in the GW4 region.[8] Over 13% of businesses in Bristol and 57% in Bath are in the creative sector.[9] Around Cardiff, it accounts for more than 22,000 jobs.[10] In 2015, 26,900 workers in the creative economy were identified in the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP, an increase of 12% since 2011.[11]

Bridging the Gap offered the chance to explore collaborations between universities and the creative industries more broadly, as well as the specific legacy of the major AHRC investment in the creative economy in the GW4 region through REACT, which enabled new models of collaboration between academics and creative practitioners.[12] Within the GW4 region, research on the process of the REACT collaborations has demonstrated that the benefit of collaboration exceeded the outcomes of individual projects, highlighting that the collaborations extended and strengthened the networks of the participants (both academic and non-academic).[13] The new nodes that accumulated in these personal networks, exposed each individual to a more diverse set of activities and forms of expertise, consequently reshaping the expectations and ambitions of hundreds of participants.[14]

'I THINK MOST RESEARCHERS GOING INTO REACT STARTED FROM THE IDEA "I WILL BE THE ACADEMIC AND THEY WILL BE THE CREATIVE PARTNER". ACTUALLY, WHAT WE FOUND WAS THAT IT WAS HARDER TO TEASE APART THE ROLES. WHAT WAS PRODUCED WAS GENUINELY CO-PRODUCED AND IT WAS HARD TO SAY WHERE ONE SKILLSET ENDED AND ANOTHER BEGAN, OR ONE KNOWLEDGE ENDED AND ANOTHER BEGAN. THAT EXPERIENCE SHIFTED MY ROLE AS AN ACADEMIC – A MID-CAREER REBRANDING.'

Professor Tim Cole, Director of the Brigstow Institute, University of Bristol

For several academics we interviewed, exposure to REACT also had a transformative effect on their ambitions for future research. This is visible in the activities and roles of certain participants post-REACT, who feel that the collaborations developed their capacity to engage different kinds of skills from those traditional to academic work.[15] This broadening of academic talent includes the offering of new courses and different modes of teaching as well as increasing opportunities for future grant capture. This is typical of the best of co-produced research, and indicative that such partnerships encourage mutual learning and institutional culture-change.

REACT's success was largely predicated on the long-term involvement of UWE and the University of Bristol with Watershed through the Pervasive Media Studio. It is evidence of how productive long-term collaborative relationships can be. Post-REACT, the GW4 universities have all sought new modes to sustain and develop local ecologies. Cardiff University has invested in the local cultural ecology via Creative Cardiff (www.creativecardiff.org); the University of Bristol has set up Brigstow to kick-start imaginative interdisciplinary and co-produced work (www.bristol.ac.uk/brigstow/about); Kaleider in Exeter has received financial support from the University of Exeter (www.kaleider.com); and Edge Arts has received increased support from the University of Bath (www.edgearts.org). All these structures create new opportunities for collaborative research to emerge. In the wake of REACT, Bridging the Gap considered the longer-term effects of universities' increased imbrication in local, regional, national and international cultural networks. In doing so it identified positive legacies, but also a number of factors that need further consideration if the potential of collaboration is to be realised.

BROADENING (AND DEEPENING) INSTITUTIONAL INTERFACES AT ALL STAGES OF THE ACADEMIC CAREER STRUCTURE

Our findings suggest that alongside valuing collaborative research and development projects, the mobility of individuals between institutions strengthens the 'ecology of collaboration', fostering better institutional and sectoral understanding, generating vibrant and responsive relationships, and laying the ground for sustained functional partnerships. Bridging the Gap identified two important mechanisms through which relationships were produced and maintained that have previously received little attention in the Arts and Humanities. The first of these was cross-institutional and cross-sectoral activity at leadership level. The career of Ian Hargreaves, at Cardiff University,

provides a particularly vivid example of how individuals can bridge the gap. First appointed Professor of Journalism at Cardiff, and then five years ago as Professor of Digital Economy, Hargreaves has previously held a number of leading roles in the media and thus he is one of a number of academics (currently far more common in STEM than Arts and Humanities subjects) who has transitioned from industry professional to an academic role with explicit transdisciplinary and engagement-focused objectives. He maintains these connections in high profile roles in the media and government, contributing, for example, to the development of intellectual property policy at a national level. Feedback from those working at Ffilm Cymru and Arts Council Wales and those collaborating with the BBC echoed the importance of academic researchers in both formal and informal advisory roles, which can be fundamental to the sector's good functioning and strategic development. Whilst the value of this mobility is recognised in universities with a strong focus on applied arts research, it is not yet accorded much value in Arts and Humanities departments in research-intensive universities.

A second, similar, mechanism for developing institutional connectivity happens at doctoral level (see also Heritage strand). On the one hand, fluidity between universities and the sector is achieved when those working in the creative industries re-enter the academy as doctoral students. On the other, doctoral training and placements offer a forum through which future academics understand the role of academic knowledge in the creative and cultural industries. The AHRC-funded South-West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership has been important in that respect. However, mobility at this level is currently restricted by definitions of academic success and productivity in research-intensive universities. The value of academics holding creative economy experience is almost exclusively recognised at professorial level and above. Those whose careers fall between the structural openness of doctoral level research and the autonomy gained at professorship are largely constrained to short-term (and most particularly grant-dependent) forms of collaboration. Thus, prospective longer-term relationships and roles for academics in the sector (possibilities that look promising at PhD level) tend to be laid aside for individual researchers to achieve permanent positions or promotions in the academy through more traditional routes. Clearly, simply increasing the points of contact between universities and the creative economy is insufficient: the gain in sectoral knowledge needs to be nurtured in sustainable ways. Ongoing engagement with the creative economy (and this extends beyond the creative industries to other sectors such as heritage) could be significantly improved by a recalibration of early career pathways (particularly the criteria for appointments) and by the development of research residencies/exchanges with creative economy partners.[16]

'IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO FIND AN ACADEMIC NICHE AT EXETER, BECAUSE THERE JUST WASN'T THE PEER GROUP, AND I FELT LIKE I WAS REALLY FIGHTING FOR RECOGNITION OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING, DIGITAL HUMANITIES, GAMES WRITING AND NARRATIVE DESIGN, IT BEING SUCH A NEW FIELD. THAT REALLY FORCED ME TO LOOK OUTSIDE, TO THE INDUSTRY, TO WHERE THINGS WERE ACTUALLY HAPPENING, AND TO LEARN BY DOING THE JOB RATHER THAN THEORISING ABOUT IT, THEN BRING THAT BACK INTO ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION.'

Hannah Wood, PhD from University of Exeter, founder of Story Juice and Lecturer in Creative and Games Writing, Falmouth University.

COLLABORATING BEYOND TRANSACTION: RISK, TRUST AND CREATIVITY

Research collaborations with the cultural and creative industries occupy the full spectrum between object-oriented and transactional relationships to open-ended and curiosity driven research. Although it is sometimes beneficial for projects to simply borrow from the expertise of either partner (specific scholarship or practical creative economy know-how), the most exciting and productive projects are those in which both partners are equally engaged in the process of discovery and learning and in which formal roles are 'dissolved' (see Environmental Humanities strand). For research partners in the creative sector to be fully engaged, a research collaboration needs to challenge existing practice in their fields, advance their portfolio and reputation, and match their financial environment and the sector timetable. While this might sound like common sense, it is surprisingly difficult to generate projects that are fulfilling for both sides. Individual academics, by virtue of their role in the grant application system, are often in the position of purse-holder, which can lead to a situation in which the academic may feel like they are commissioning rather than collaborating and unwittingly lay uncomfortable constraints on their partners.

Lack of sensitivity by academic partners can harm collaboration in a number of ways. Firstly, it can constrain the innovative potential of the project. In our discussions, we have heard of several examples where creative partners found themselves constrained by decisions that were inappropriate to their particular medium or industry, or were disappointed to be relegated to the role of a contractor delivering output. The reverse of course can also be true, where the academic can become the supplier of mere content. If either partner allows their own expectations to dominate, the project is unlikely to reflect what is innovative for their partners. The process of negotiating expectations needs close attention and can benefit from external support. It is important to recognise instances where long-term collaborative relationships have successfully established mutually-challenging objectives and generated opportunities for collective learning.

Secondly, lack of knowledge of the structure of the creative industries can damage the partner's ability to realise the value of the partnership. In collaboration with individual professional creative practitioners or small businesses, the financial value of a research project is particularly crucial. In Bridging the Gap, we have seen instances when research funds didn't reflect the full economic cost of the in-kind resources and expertise brought by the partner.

'THE UNIVERSITY WOULD ARRANGE MEETINGS OR THEY'D DO TALKS ABOUT THE EVENT AND ACTUALLY WOULDN'T MENTION OUR ORGANISATION. TRYING TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT IT AFTER, I WAS CLEAR THAT WE FELT WE NEEDED A BIT MORE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. IT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE A PARTNERSHIP AFTER THE EVENT. THEY MIGHT HAVE SEEN IT IN A DIFFERENT WAY, IN THE SENSE THAT THEY PAID FOR IT AND THEY COULD TALK ABOUT IT HOW THEY WANT. I THINK THAT AFFECTED FUTURE WORK I WOULD DO WITH THEM.'

Head of Collaboration for a large cultural organisation.

Equally, we have seen projects in which payment or the late structuring of project milestones precluded the partner from securing the full financial or reputational value from the collaboration. In some cases, the structuring of payments and pace of the project severely endangered the financial viability of the partner. In other cases, partners were not fully credited for their contributions. It is unrealistic to expect an academic to be fully informed about the economy and working practices of the creative and cultural industries, but it is possible to make adjustments to individual and institutional practices to mitigate the risk of the creative partners.

In Bridging the Gap, we have observed at least two ways that respect and mutual benefits can be achieved. Firstly, the mediating work of Creative Producers – central to the REACT hub - with their knowledge of industry practices, contexts and costings, play a key role in guiding collaborations towards paths that support development for both partners.

Secondly, we saw examples of partnerships (for example Olion/Traces) in which mutual understandings of risk, cost and resourcing had accumulated through multiple iterations of collaboration, and increasingly challenging projects.

'YOU ALMOST NEED A TRANSLATOR IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE PROJECTS. IN THE ARTS WE'RE VERY COMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA OF THE PRODUCER ROLE. THAT ROLE, IF YOU LIKE PRODUCING BETWEEN THE ARTS AND ACADEMICS IS ANOTHER LEVEL OF SKILLSET THAT IS A BIT RARER.'

L.M., Arts Council Wales.

CASE STUDY — OLION/TRACES

Olion/Traces is an app that offers visitors to St Fagans National Museum of History an innovative way of experiencing the museum grounds. Rather than a traditional audio/tourist guide, the app is aural experience and choreographed walk through the site that links fragments of fact and fiction in an artistic interpretation of the site and archives.

The project was developed in partnership between Jenny Kidd, Senior Lecturer in the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University; Allie John, producer at yellobrick creative marketing agency; and Sara Huws, on behalf of the Digital Media Department at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales. The project was funded by Cardiff University from ESRC Impact Acceleration funds and completed in around eighteen months. Producing the app involved archival research, and conversations with the museum staff about the site, and creative development with a writer, composer, actor and software developers. The possibility of achieving such a rich and complete digital heritage interpretation in such a short space of time was facilitated by a working relationship that had developed in a previous project. Jenny and Allie had collaborated on a project funded by REACT in 2013-14. This earlier project With New Eyes I See, had been a first exploration of using gaming architectures to access museum and archival content 'in the wild' to build an interactive trail in Cardiff's Cathays Park charting the life of a WWI soldier. Independently, Sara Huws had been working on other digital projects that proposed new forms of emotional engagement with heritage.

Olion/Traces challenged each of the project partners to do more than 'business as usual'. For Jenny Kidd the project fulfilled an ongoing ambition to be a participant-academic in the heritage sector (rather than standing back as observer or critic). Jenny's involvement wasn't just at the 'ideas' stage: the entire design was iteratively built on successive rounds of development and feedback through which both the conceptual and practical aspects of the app evolved. For Allie John and yello brick the project contributed to the development of the company's diverse expertise and creative portfolio. For Sara Huws, it was an opportunity to collaborate on and contribute to reinventing heritage experience via digital interpretation (rather than the museum being a 'host' or consumer of research outputs). The pre-existing relationship and track record of collaboration gave the group the confidence to embark on a project that was open-ended and curiosity-led, trusting that each partner would work flexibly towards a goal that was mutually defined and redefined. The result is a contribution to the sector that is truly innovative.

Whether through the intervention of a producer as a third party or by supporting relationships that have achieved that level of mutual cooperation, this trust and understanding among and between partners is invaluable but requires resourcing by funders or greater investment by universities. But our interviews also revealed a wider issue hidden behind the question of resourcing: that of timetables, delivery and sustainability.

The question of resourcing and the pace of research has two facets. The first of these is the rhythm of project funding and the distribution of funds. For example, the call for financing models to be better adapted to working with SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises that dominate in the creative sector) is often a question of timing. However, this difficulty is part of a larger mismatch between the economic pace of universities and the creative industries. Drawing on the feedback from our discussants in Bridging the Gap, we are not suggesting that research collaborations should directly match the conditions/ practices of creative industry partners. The university is valued as a research and development site that offers the opportunity to work more reflectively and profoundly and with a greater level of institutional security than is offered by the fluctuations within the creative industries' 'business as usual'. Yet existing project-length and object-oriented models of funding do not currently take advantage of the benefits of either university staying-power or creative industry responsiveness. New funding models that combine short-term project grants with longer-term more experimental and open-ended support need further exploration. Creative Cardiff provide an important example of innovation in that respect.

Secondly, funding and project design need to be informed by a greater understanding of how 'research' and 'development' intersect in the creative sectors. It cannot be taken for granted that traditional models of funding built on linear or 'pipe-line' models for innovation will generate success in the creative industries. In this sector, activities that might more typically be identified as 'research' are intrinsically linked to testing and delivering outcomes: research may inform the whole process of a film under production (rather than just the planning stage), social media may simultaneously be a site of research and of contact with future audiences. The academic partner may well be key player in delivering a creative research outcome to particular communities and without their contribution, the project may fall flat. Under current funding models the academic's time is rarely resourced at that stage. Finally, while our creative industry discussants recognised that academic input often gives creative work greater depth, it can also add complexity. This richness adds value to the creative partner in the longer term but represents more cost to them in the short, and a higher risk on financial return and opportunities for growth. Funding models need to take these diverse temporal sequences of research and development into account.

'WE TALKED A LOT IN REACT ABOUT "FAST" AND "SLOW" MONEY. "SLOW MONEY" WAS ROUTED THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY. BUT SOMETIMES IT WAS NECESSARY TO PAY FOR FLIGHTS TO A SHOWCASE, OR FOR A LAWYER TO ATTEND A MEETING AT LAST MINUTE AND IT WAS REALLY, REALLY IMPORTANT TO HAVE "FAST MONEY" TO HAVE ANY CHANCE AT THE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT SIDE OF THINGS.'

Jo Lansdowne, Creative Programme Manager, Watershed, Bristol.

HERITAGE

The heritage sector is of vital importance to the GW4 region in both cultural and economic terms, and represents enormous potential for fruitful partnerships with Arts and Humanities researchers, alongside those from other disciplines. Heritage research partners can be found right across the university: in the Arts and Humanities, but also in Computing, Management and the Sciences. The sector is extraordinarily diverse and is made up of organisations working across a range of scales: from national museums, to regional and specialist museums and collections, to community and volunteer-led organisations and small consultancy firms. This includes local authorities and national governments who, in addition to preserving heritage, are also responsible for the development of policy on its conservation and use. The sector in the GW4 region also reflects the great wealth of kinds of cultural heritage: not only object–based collections, paper archives and libraries, but in buildings and infrastructure such as railways and mines, protected natural environments, and the intangible heritage of song, craft and tradition.

The role of universities in the context of heritage research is changing rapidly. Since 2006 heritage organisations have been able to apply for the status 'Independent Research Organisation', which means that they are eligible to apply for Research Council funding independently of universities, and have been doing so. In 2013 the AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme was altered so that a range of external partners (rather than universities) became the locus of decision making about research questions. As a result, heritage organisations are now imbricated in research and publishing networks in new ways. These networks have offered museums and other organisations the opportunity to explore new avenues, new audiences and new ways of working.

Simultaneously, however, the heritage sector has received dwindling subsidy from other national and especially local government sources. Many heritage organisations now run on a skeleton staff that can struggle to maintain basic services and are having to re-think their offer to enable ongoing access to their core constituencies. It is noticeable that significant new strategies for interpreting and presenting heritage are now routinely connected to higher education collaborations. Such partnerships are frequently funded through RCUK grants or in association with Heritage Lottery Funding which has a significant form of university partnership.

'HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ARE BECOMING THE UNACKNOWLEDGED CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE UK.'

Brigid Howarth, Senior Impact and Partnership Development Manager, University of Exeter.

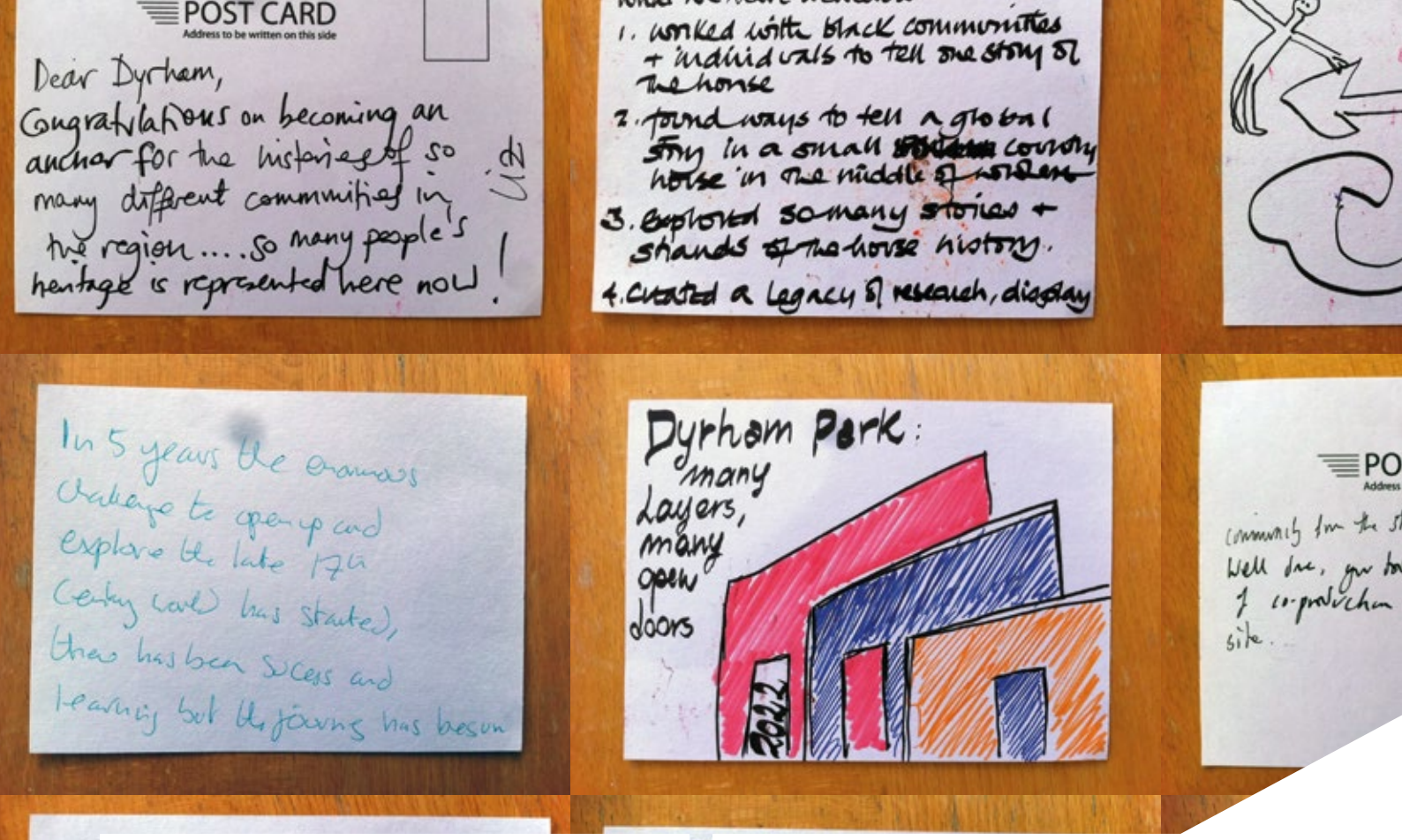
The growing importance of university collaboration is, therefore, keenly recognised by the sector. A large representation from the heritage sector at the launch workshop of Bridging the Gap confirmed sector interest, as did attendance at several parallel initiatives that explored the benefits of university-heritage collaborations in 2016-17, including workshops and sessions at a conference run by the South West Federation of Museums, and the Museum and University Partnership Initiative.[17] Across these forums, concerns about collaboration gathered around two particular topics: firstly, access to university research and finding the 'right' expertise; secondly, sustainability, and the difficulty of building and maintaining positive collaborations with short-term project grants in a sector riven by cuts.

GETTING THE RIGHT EXPERTISE

The Bridging the Gap launch event identified a very strong interest in research collaboration from the heritage sector, but demonstrated a lack of clarity about how to set up partnerships and what could be expected from them. This was particularly difficult for small organisations, which find it hard to resource the development of research grant bids. The confusion appeared to stem from several factors. The first was that research doesn't necessarily hold the same meaning across different sectors and working practices. Many heritage organisations are interested in partnering with academics to fill gaps in their own expertise and so begin their search by trying to identify researchers who hold specialist knowledge on specific topics: for example, a historian of twentieth-century domestic service. This straightforward 'input' of research can sometimes be a useful transaction. However, it isn't always easy to fit narrow — and especially pre-existing research topics — into the production of 'new' knowledge as recognised in academic contexts. Consequently, initial requests from heritage organisations often look unpromising to academic researchers (see Environmental Humanities strand and, in reverse, the Creative Economy strand).

The collaborations with greatest longer-term productivity were more likely to propose new frameworks for understanding heritage or developing interpretation.

This work doesn't necessarily require a matching subject specialism in the academic researcher, but rather an openness to work in new contexts and a willingness to participate in creative problem-solving (see Environmental Humanities strand). These projects are not easy to establish, however for a variety of reasons. From a practical point of view, the organisation of university websites — with their focus on specialist topics — doesn't assist partners in finding academics with the right mix of aptitude and skills. Where the right academic can be found, open-ended research still represents greater risk to the heritage organisations. Although this research might represent a greater step forward, there isn't such an obvious accountable 'gain' as there would be in a new display or a review of visitor experience.



In sum, there is a gap in what heritage organisations need from research in the short-term (straightforward subject content and evaluation) that universities aren't necessarily able, or keen, to provide. Simultaneously, potential encounters around more innovative and challenging research questions are difficult to generate within current structures and funding models. In order to see change here, universities have a role to play in supporting the heritage sector to see the full possibilities of collaborative work, with this being especially critical for the small and local organisations that are a vital, if sometimes hidden, part of the sector. During Bridging the Gap we ran a workshop that explored understandings of research across universities and the heritage sector, highlighting a number of key requirements. Firstly, there is a need for increased visibility of collaborative research projects and opportunities (both online and events-based) so that universities can make their offer clearer. Secondly, there is currently a 'gap' in the areas of specialised research that heritage organisations find difficult to fund and yet academic researchers find difficult to justify giving their time to under current research agendas. This gap could be better addressed if Arts and Humanities academics become more habituated to consultancy models, and also if both sides saw these as the basis for building up deeper relationships (see Environmental Humanities strand for more on an ecology of collaboration that takes into account short-term and longer-term projects and research questions).
The question of the mechanisms to develop, and the funding models to sustain, longer-term relationships between Arts and Humanities researchers and the heritage sector became a central question.

SUSTAINABILITY

While many collaborative projects are successful in fulfilling the specific requirements of the funded project or short-term goals, fewer mature into legacy relationships. This is in large part due to the difficulties, on both sides, of maintaining relationships before, after and between funded projects. As with the findings of other strands, trust is key to successful collaborative relationships and yet this is difficult to establish where time to meet and work together is very limited for both academics and heritage sector partners. This is compounded by the fragility of employment in the heritage sector and the mobility of academics, especially in early career. Where long-term relationships have been established, they are often highly personal (between a particular academic, and a particular individual in the heritage sector). This results in projects built on single points of contact, which can be heavy burdens for those involved, and once lost, are very difficult to replace.

In order to get maximum benefit, we recommend building research collaborations as inter-institutional encounters into both project design and practice. While it is important to recognise that successful collaboration always requires warm personal relationships, expanding the points of contact produced in a collaboration could have beneficial effects. This does not have to be complicated. It can take the form of inviting a wider network of colleagues to meetings. It could include a demonstration of awareness of the project and 'buy in' from those managing the collaborating partners (e.g. department heads or museum management). This mitigates the loss of a single point,

whether academic or heritage partner, and enables better institutional memory of the knowledge produced. It recognises the value of the process of collaboration to all parties (in addition to any specific research outputs). Greater integration of the collaborations into both universities and partner organisations allows for the culture change and knowledge exchange that is generated to ripple through institutions (Creative Economy strand). This may include anything from research or professional practice methods to cultural insights about partner organisations.

'OVER THE FIVE YEARS, IN THEIR OWN WAY, ALL THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS ADDED MASSIVE VALUE TO OUR TEAM AND HOW WE WORKED. THEY HAD AN IMPACT ON THE CULTURE OF OUR ORGANISATION AND CONTRIBUTED TO GENERATING NEW IDEAS.'

Sam Rose Chief Executive of the Jurassic Coast Trust.

'THE PARTNERING OF STUDENT RESEARCH INTERNS WITH VOLUNTEERS AT OUR ORGANISATION HAS RESULTED IN INTERGENERATIONAL CONVERSATIONS THAT HAVE MADE THE WHOLE INSTITUTION FEEL LIKE A MORE WELCOMING PLACE.'

Emma Dunn Programme Manager, Devon and Exeter Institution

ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES

Turning from two important sectors within the regional economy – the creative economy and heritage sector – Bridging the Gap also considered the question of the value of Arts and Humanities research from the perspective of two interdisciplinary groupings of scholars: environmental humanists and modern linguists. Here, focus shifted somewhat from primarily the needs of external partners, to the nature of the skills offered by Arts and Humanities scholars, although there are clear overlaps with themes identified in the Creative Economy and Heritage strands around both the mechanisms and values needed for effective collaborative working.

The study of Environmental Humanities is one that is rarely identified as a discipline, but rather draws together scholars from across Arts and Humanities whose interests focus on the human experience of, and relationship with, the natural world. This strand offered, therefore, the possibility of considering the interplay between specialist disciplinary training, thematic interdisciplinary scholarship and the questions of external partners, based on real-world issues.

Rather than working primarily with workshops and interviews to address these questions, the Environmental Humanities strand experimented with the short-term embedding of groups of Arts and Humanities academics within two National Trust properties in South West England to explore what a small interdisciplinary group might learn from, and bring to, unfamiliar sites. Perhaps it is most useful to think of this as an experiment in creating a temporary community (to paraphrase Marilyn Strathern) that came into being and coalesced around a particular place: a community distinguished by attentiveness, inquisitiveness and openness to discussion rather than possession of specific knowledge of the site.[18]

An 'outsider' perspective is always intrinsically valuable. However, we were particularly concerned with exploring what the particular value might be when those 'outsiders' were a group of Arts and Humanities researchers. In particular, what might methods of listening, questioning, looking, walking and talking (not to mention smelling and touching) that bring into play a range of other knowledge and approaches, contribute to the National Trust?

Two different teams – with some overlap of membership - of academics from History and English Literature departments in the GW4 universities spent time embedded in the National Trust's properties at Stourhead in Wiltshire and Sherborne in Gloucestershire. In the case of the former, the site was identified through a previous connection between the property's general manager and one of the academics. In the case of the latter, the site was identified by the National Trust's regional curator. In both cases, the initial on-site meetings between two academics and members of the local National Trust team took a very similar form, with broad movement across a two-hour conversation from the immediate, pressing and specific needs of estate staff (where it appeared that Arts and Humanities researchers had little, or less, to contribute) to the eventual raising of more medium-term and broader strategic opportunities of the 'at some point I'd like to explore X' variety. It was here that areas emerged where Arts and Humanities research could bring something of value. Identifying this middle ground meshed wider strategic concerns on the part of National Trust staff with a piquing of the interest of curious Arts and Humanities researchers. In this fertile space, possible areas of mutual benefit were identified and later refined into an agreed programme of work over the course of two days at each site.

VALUING ARTS AND HUMANITIES METHODS IN COPRODUCTION

Despite both the sites and academic teams being different, a number of shared approaches emerged across the experiment that drew on the wider tool kit of Arts and Humanities research:

Asking questions/reading 'texts'.
At the core of ways of working in situ were the familiar methodologies of Arts and Humanities scholarship characterised by an inquisitiveness and questioning of people (National Trust staff, volunteers, visitors, others we encountered in and around the places) and of engagement with the place itself as a multi-layered text and outdoor archive, drawing on a rich tradition of reading landscapes.

'GETTING OUT INTO THE LIVED AND WORKED ENVIRONMENT OF THE SHERBORNE ESTATE HAS CREATED AN INTERESTING SPACE TO THINK ABOUT HOW MY DISCIPLINE COLLIDES WITH OTHER WAYS OF THINKING.'

Dr Tamsin Badcoe, Lecturer in English Literature, University of Bristol

Identifying themes/contrasts/tensions/ juxtapositions.
We approached both sites as multi-layered texts and outdoor archives, in a spirit of trying to make sense of their complexity over time and space, and distil that to a number of creative tensions/contrasts/themes. In both places, it was striking how the group sought to draw connections between ostensibly very different micro-sites within the landscape (e.g. at Sherborne, the balconies on a SWW airfield control tower and a seventeenth-century hunting lodge) or to draw out and play with on-site tensions (e.g. at Stourhead, the co-presence of Pagan and Christian, Ancient and Modern references). As staff with an intimate, detailed knowledge of the sites later reflected, these perspectives afforded them novel ways of thinking about familiar places.

'I KNOW A LOT ABOUT CERTAIN AREAS, BUT OFTEN IF YOU WORK WITH ACADEMICS YOU GET A MUCH BROADER PICTURE, AND WE CAN ALL GAIN FROM MAKING THOSE CONNECTIONS.'

Sue Giles, Senior Curator World Cultures, Bristol Culture / Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Seeking out and crafting historical narratives
Telling stories is central to many Arts and Humanities scholars (as well as those in the heritage sector or creative economy) and there was a looking for, a finding of, and telling of stories to ground these place in named or unnamed people (e.g. at Sherborne, the gravestone set up by the family for a long-serving housekeeper). However, as well as seeking to make sense of a place through a single story, the team sought to connect the local to the global and contextualise these sites within much bigger stories (e.g. Stourhead and histories of banking and global capitalism; Sherborne and militarised landscapes) Feedback from the National Trust hosts suggested that one highly valued contribution by the 'immersed' academics, was the capacity to weave 'big-picture' stories, and abstract themes through personal stories in ways that remained respectful to individuals and addressed the specific qualities of a historic site.

'THIS IS SUCH A POWERFUL STUDY WITH SO MANY APPLICATIONS. I LOVE IT'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIG NARRATIVES THAT GIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE STOURHEAD RELEVANT TO A VERY DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF VISITORS... I AM AM VERY EXCITED BY THE INSIGHTS AND THE PROVOCATIONS IN THESE "GATHERED THOUGHTS" ... [WHICH] ARE SO PROVOCATIVE AND SO POWERFULLY DRAWN ... AND RIGHT AT THE HEART OF OUR NATIONAL THINKING ON CURATORIAL EXPERIENCE AND "RELEVANCE".'

General Manager, Stourhead

Unearthing further questions.
A familiar experience of any researcher is how research begets research. Rather than generating a series of answers, the two days embedded in each property generated new sets of research questions (e.g. Stourhead and the centuries-long history of visitors to this site, Sherborne and the wartime history of RAF Windrush.) There was a clear sense that the next stage would be one where further discussion would be critical in identifying (on the part of the National Trust) which additional questions were most potentially fruitful and strategic to pursue. Reflections from Bridging the Gap's immersive, short term project will already now inform – and 'benchmark' - the development of Stourhead's five-year programming plan. This suggests that deeper collaboration would have substantial contributions to make to the long-term development of research and interpretation at the property.

Arts and Humanities academics are often called upon to draw together broad themes and narratives in developing teaching programmes. These short residencies demonstrated the benefit of bringing that breadth of approaches and methodologies (and not simply the specialist knowledge) to collaborations with external partners who, themselves, have a far deeper, specialist knowledge of a particular place. This highlights the value of developing more-than-transactional research partnerships that engage more than narrowly defined academic expertise.

VALUING CURIOSITY-LED RESEARCH IN COPRODUCTION

As well as moving beyond more transactional models of the transfer of specialist knowledge, the Environmental Humanities strand also responded to the generous invitation of their project partners in the National Trust to pursue more open-ended, curiosity-led research, rather than respond to a specifically framed challenge. Although challenge-led research benefits from a clarity of relevant outputs that respond directly to existing needs, it does have a number of potential limitations. Firstly, pre-setting the research question limits the capacity to innovate, whereas openness allows for the ongoing identification of a wider range of challenges and opportunities (or framing what the right questions to ask are). Secondly, the danger is that external partners are framed as those who know the business and so set the question and dominate the first stage of working, while academics are framed as those who provide research and give answers and dominate the second stage of working. This tendency to pre-set roles limits the possibility for more dynamic and fluid sharing of knowledge and adopting of new roles across the duration of research relationships that move beyond the confines of transactional models (see also Creative Economy strand). As a result, the collaboration is unlikely to lead to long-term personal or institutional development.

The project as a whole – and in particular the creative economy and environmental humanities strands – pointed to the value of more open-ended and ongoing relationships between academics and external partners that are driven not by specific challenges, but opportunities for curiosity-driven co-produced investigation. These ways of working are attractive to both external partners and academics: for many academics - and the same is true of many creative industry partners - traditions of curiosity-led research persist and continue to be valued; for external partners, curiosity-led research can be the only way to address 'wicked' problems where even framing the challenge appears premature. Our hosts at one site reflected that our perspective offered a welcome dose of 'blue skies thinking'.

'IT'S EXCITING TO BE OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON SOMETHING THAT MIGHT BE OPEN-ENDED IN WHERE IT LEADS, AND WHERE IT FEELS LIKE YOU'RE BEING MET AS PEERS RATHER THAN SOMEONE SAYING, "WE'LL GIVE YOU THE PRESTIGE, YOU'LL HELP US TICK IMPACT BECAUSE YOU HAVE LOTS OF CHILDREN COMING THROUGH THE DOOR"'

S.H, National Museum Wales/ Amgueddfa Cymru

What is needed for these kinds of more open-ended explorations to flourish are a different set of qualities and mechanisms from more transactional challenge-led research relationships. Values like trust and hospitality are critical (see also Creative Economy strand on sectoral understanding and respect). At both Stourhead and Sherborne, the academic team felt very much trusted by the National Trust team and welcomed into their space as guests with an invitation to roam freely and talk with staff, volunteers, tenants and visitors (and so somehow sit somewhere between the Trust and its publics). The more open-ended nature of these relationships calls for different time-scales and ways of working, that are about nurturing ongoing coproduced research partnerships – between trusted and respected peers - rather than more time-limited delivery of easily accountable outputs.

MODERN LANGUAGES

Over the course of Bridging the Gap, it became evident that engaging in collaborative research with external partners forces us to reconsider traditional relationships between disciplinary identity, particular research skills and subject-specific knowledge in universities. Of the four strands explored by Bridging the Gap, the Modern Languages strand is the only one centred on an academic department in the humanities, rather than a thematic or applied field for academic knowledge. Therefore, this strand offered the opportunity to reflect more broadly on how co-production functions in relation to the structure of the academy.

It is a commonplace in literature on research co-production that real-world problems tend to be complex. To successfully comprehend those issues, to build research strategies and make progress, collaborative projects must draw on a wider range of conceptual and practical skills than are usually demanded by academic research. The Connected Communities report *Creating Living Knowledge* identified a new typology of roles — collaborative research requires academics to turn their hand to promotion and publicity, responsive and negotiated ethical decision-making, and project managing employees or volunteers in non-academic organisations.[19] Undertaking these roles requires adaptability and agnosticism about the 'correct' location for specific knowledge practices.

Modern Languages scholars are paradigmatic in this respect. In addition to being home to scholars of multiple languages and cultures, Modern Languages departments offer an enormous range of types of research practice and methods. They house not only scholars analysing literature, drama or film but also social scientists engaging visual methods, historical, sociological, geographical, even computational approaches as well as oral history, art-based methods or participative action research. This 'un-discipline' or 'in-discipline' has been positively affirmed as an identity by Modern Language researchers in recent years. Such diversity also offers positive opportunities for collaboration with non-academic partners.

Moreover, Modern Languages scholars are uniquely well-versed in skills that have been identified as central to all collaborative practice. Collaborative research requires a recognition of the fact that knowledge doesn't travel smoothly between contexts — that it needs to actively be moved 'across discursive, material and institutional boundaries'.[20] A lack of understanding of how apparently innocent terms might operate for different communities (even those that share a common tongue) can have surprising and disruptive consequences. Successful collaboration usually requires the work of an 'ambassador' who can navigate those cultural differences. For these reasons, Professor Charles Forsdick, leader of the AHRC theme Translating Cultures has described the influence of Modern Languages on other Arts and Humanities research as 'catalytic'.[21]

The ambassadorial aspect of Modern Languages research equips scholars with the skills to observe and interpret diverse cultural contexts. However, it also does far more, and in particular through co-produced research modern language scholars can act as facilitators connecting global communities and opening pathways to new dialogue. In GW4 they have promoted collective problem-solving across national boundaries and experiments in new communication practices and forms – from innovative forms of documentary and publishing (Matthew Brown — Quipu https://interactive.quipu-project.com, Alexis Nuselovici — Book Kernel www.bookkernel.com), to art-based participative methodologies tackling social inequalities in cities (Christina Horvath and Nina Parish — CO-CREATION www.co-creation-network.org)

COLLABORATIVE MODERN LANGUAGES RESEARCH AND THE PUBIC IDEA OF LANGUAGES

Despite evident potential and proven success in the field of collaborative research, Modern Language scholars' work in the wider world is hindered by their disciplinary identity. In his keynote address opening the Bridging the Gap workshop, Charles Forsdick gave close attention to the deficits of the 'public idea of modern languages'. In particular, Forsdick focused on a misconception of Modern Languages as "too extrovert". Modern Languages scholars were seen to be operating 'there', in the rest of the world, rather than 'here in the UK'.[22] In today's world this binary is invalid - 19% of primary school children in the UK have a first language other than English. Co-produced research offers particular opportunities to rectify this persistent misconception by making visible 'hidden' bridges between the South West and the world, bringing ideas and experiences into the region, mediating cultural difference and discord within the region, and opening new possibilities for its citizens and businesses.

'BUSINESS, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, DIPLOMACY AND SECURITY ALL REQUIRE INDIVIDUALS WHO CAN MOVE IN AND OUT OF OTHER CULTURES WITH EASE. PART OF THAT EASE IS LINGUISTIC AND PART OF IT IS CULTURAL.'

Prof Janice Carruthers, AHRC Leadership Fellow for Modern Languages

A further difficulty comes from the identification of Modern Languages with the acquisition of skills, rather than with research, methodological innovation, or analysis. This belies the scope of the discipline, but particularly its powerful benefits for policy at home and beyond. Modern Language researchers hold not only an understanding of linguistic communities, but also of how those map onto economic, political and social issues. The project Transnationalizing Modern Languages (Bristol/Cardiff) is generating new understanding of linguistic diasporas as geopolitical entities that defy traditional categories. Modern language researchers at Cardiff have been exploring the difficulty of delivering healthcare and education in multilingual environments, through the university's Phoenix Project. In CO-CREATION (Bath/Oxford Brookes) Modern Language researchers have been exploring new methods to address and improve social justice.

It has been demonstrated in prior research on the engaged university that most collaborations are forged by approaches made by external partners.[23] While this impoverished idea of Modern Languages persists, potential partners are unlikely to seek out Modern Language scholars for their full range of expertise. Fulfilling the potential of Modern Language research collaborations requires a re-framing of how expertise is identified and valued, both inside and outside the academy.

REFRAMING THE PUBLIC IDEA OF MODERN LANGUAGES IN THE GREAT WEST

The projects cited above are indicative of significant achievements by Modern Language researchers in developing in-depth understandings of the goals and cultures of different sectors (migrant communities, international cultural audiences, software and creative technology developers, local government). This accumulated knowledge of an increasing range of contexts is potentially available to universities and other organisations across the region, but there is currently no formal mechanism that collates learning from these projects, or that celebrates these outcomes of collaborative research — which are instead seen as 'experiential' or 'just context'. Such a forum would necessarily need to be a multidisciplinary one.

Modern Languages, as the paradigmatic 'interdisciplinary' discipline with a huge conceptual and geographical reach but a relatively poor public image and a low level of institutional funding, demonstrates the need for those new mechanisms especially clearly. A themed GW4 network that brought together multidisciplinary expertise around an area such as Migration, Cultural Translation or Cultural Memory would provide an opportunity to consolidate expertise and further relationships with external research partners. GW4 might well also consider building up multidisciplinary groups or networks based on collaboration with different sectors: e.g., local government, NGOs, cultural organisations and geographical regions.

INFORMAL NETWORKS SUCH AS THESE WOULD:

- allow external partners to find projects and research partners that match their interests more easily;
- allow rapid response to opportunities for collaborative work, with networked interdisciplinary teams with relevant experience;
- offer the opportunity for peer-to-peer learning between researchers and their external partners to establish even better adapted collaborative practices

A network such as this is particularly vital to Modern Languages researchers. The forum would help adequately represent their activity and range of expertise, and assist external partners in identifying where Modern Language research would be beneficial. By demonstrating career pathways for Modern Language undergraduate and postgraduate students, it might also provide a tool to assist in reframing the public idea of language in the region. Recognising Modern Languages' full potential as a catalyst means considering the value of the discipline beyond just student recruitment, and rather as a measure of the capacity of a university (and the GW4 universities) to operate flexibly in multiple contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Bridging the Gap has generated observations that traverse the regional ecology from micro to macro. Our project findings corroborate existing studies that suggest collaboration works best when it is generated at grassroots level, when ideas match specific contexts and individuals form productive, respectful relationships.[24] However, universities provide the context for productive and respectful relationships to emerge, catalyse and develop, so institutional policy matters. This report highlights areas in which further work is needed. Bridging the Gap also firmly endorses the findings of other analyses of collaborative research practice with regard to the structure of funding, and the criteria by which funders measure success. These are of vital importance in providing an environment in which collaborations will flourish and urgently require further adaptation.[25] We make a series of key recommendations for how funding policy might better match the needs of both academics and their partners, as well as the ways that universities and regional consortia of universities like GW4 can seek to bridge the gap.

FOR UNIVERSITIES/GW4

It seems that the message about the importance and potential of Arts and Humanities collaborative projects has been heard by university leadership, but that hasn't been fully matched by policy that supports these in the longer term and promotes that message across the different parts of the university. All four GW4 universities have made some progress towards different aspects of culture change but much still needs to be done.

- **Universities as institutions need to demonstrate more respect for their partners.** This includes better adaptation to their particular needs (e.g. creating modes of payment that reflect the working practices of artists). It includes ensuring follow-through on commitments to offer academic time by flexibly freeing up researchers from other responsibilities. It includes recognition of what external partners can offer universities. In particular this means seeing project partners, and in particular strategic partners as more than publicity opportunities, and respecting their capacity to offer expertise on the development of university and regional policy.

- **There needs to be better differentiation between the kinds of partners that researchers work with.** There is more than just 'standard' (i.e. typical STEM) and 'other'. Large national cultural or heritage organisations, individual arts practitioners, multinational CE businesses, and volunteer groups have very different expectations and constraints on their mode of operation. If funding structures and institutional practices were more differentiated according to partners this would remove a lot of the strain from research projects and partnerships that are trying to fit square, hexagonal and triangular pegs into round holes. Resources that are currently being wasted on attempts to rework structures could be freed up for the actual research in hand (e.g. for small heritage organisations, projects would achieve much stronger outcomes if there were increased support to help them realise impact within their own organisation; for creative economy partners, funding that supports product/experience development (as well as research) needs to be better structured).

- **The development of the skills involved in collaborative research practice need to be better recognised by institutions through promotion policies and job creation, especially at Early Career Researcher level.**

- **There is value to be gained from greater interchange between universities and external partners at all stages of the career from collaborative PhD studentships to hiring at professorial level from industry.** In particular there is a pressing need for more to be done at Early Career Researcher and mid-career level in the form of e.g. placements of academics within external partner organisations and vice-versa.

GW4 has specific contributions to make that would increase the success of individual research projects and the responsiveness of the region to future opportunities, centred around five key strands of activity at the regional level.

- **Firstly: a GW4 platform that coalesces researchers around topics and themes that cannot be met by a single university – creating a broader pool of talent from which external partners can benefit.**

- **Secondly: a GW4 led regional forum for external partners to meet and exchange.** This offers several important benefits, but particularly: (i) increasing visibility of research collaborations and a wider understanding of their potential in the region; (ii) increasing the capacity for peer-to-peer learning amongst the partners about how to make best use of research to maximise its impact in their organisations; (iii) convening discussions that assist the development of informed regional policy on culture, heritage and the creative economy; (iv) allowing universities to better make use of the expertise of their partners in developing programmes and strategy.

- **Thirdly: GW4-led experiments in forms of funding, project and exchange structures that can meet the rapid changes in the funding and research environment, testing prototype models for collaboration which are not currently adequately provided for by either individual universities or funders.** In particular these include: (i) experimenting with modes of funding that support iterative working and long-term relationships by properly resourcing the more diverse needs of collaborative projects (ii) innovating best practice and forms of evaluation for collaborative research (iii) offering pathways for early career researchers that allows continuity in the development of hybrid Arts and Humanities researchers whose expertise encompasses the needs, ambitions and cultures of both universities and key sectors (iv) funding a shared 'producer' role to mediate between academic researchers and external partners, (v) reflecting on learning through longitudinal research of collaborative research relationships.

- **Fourthly: The drafting of a creative economy strategy for the GW4 region (to include post-1992 universities), co-written by arts and cultural organisations with universities in order for responses to opportunity/adversity (funding – e.g. currently the Industrial Strategy Research Fund's focus on Creative Industries - markets, skills etc.) to be co-ordinated.**

- **Fifthly: We see enormous potential for developing connections between the strong Modern Languages departments in the GW4 region.** In a context where Modern Languages departments are being left to shrivel or are cut, the health of Modern Languages in all four research intensive universities within the GW4 region is something to be celebrated and nurtured. Thematic-based collaborative research across the GW4 group offers a key means to achieve that end.

FOR FUNDERS OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH/AHRC

The range of ways of productive working that we identify through the four axes are not all equally well served by current funding opportunities that tend to function better at doctoral level than early career/mid-career, or tend to focus on projects rather than relationships. We recommend a broader and more flexible funding landscape that:

- **Continues to support curiosity-led (on both sides — academic and external partner) research as well as challenge-led research.** As well as maintaining responsive mode funding, we recommend developing funding models that explicitly recognize the flexible and iterative nature of curiosity-led co-produced research, with emphasis on experimental mechanisms and innovative approaches.

- **Funds the development of longer-term, iterative relationships — not only successive project-based competitions.** Demonstrably successful relationships need a mode of support that is more substantial than Follow-On Funding.

- **Works with organisations across different sectors and disciplines to identify (funded) opportunities to share expertise and experience across universities and external partners.** In particular there is a need to build career pathways within research intensive universities for the increasing number of PhD/ECRs with relevant experience who can act as gatekeepers/ points of contact.

- **Resources and values the role of third-party 'producers'.** University researchers (or other staff) are not usually in the position to be able to assess the contributions or needs of their partners — or understand best practice in other domains of work — but they usually define and control the budget. The producer role provides a vital point of translation/ mediation to mitigate this imbalance and to ensure that the collaborations are as effective as possible in the domains of all the partners involved. Resourcing this role would improve the outcomes of collaborative research projects.

- **Broadens the understanding of what constitutes 'research' within co-produced and collaborative projects.** In addition to moments of 'research', moments of production, assessment, reflection and discussion require resourcing.

- **Includes external partners (from non-IRO contexts) as Co-Investigators on grants to ensure that they are research equals and not reduced to service providers.**

- **Develops more detailed studies of the variety of relationships — and thus the variety of funding models needed — within co-produced and collaborative research in the Arts and Humanities, focused around particular disciplines and sectors.**

While we offer a number of specific recommendations to both universities and funders, we recognise that there are wider structural issues that impede and limit productive relationships and contribute to the 'gaps' we identify. Some of these are systemic — for example the league table culture and marketization of higher education which makes universities competitors rather than collaborators with knock-on effects for external partners. Others are related to wider-academic culture, such as the challenges in often conservative Arts and Humanities communities about valuing co-produced and interdisciplinary research in hiring, promotions and the REF.[26] To bridge the gaps will take more than the efforts of individual academics, universities or funders. It demands wider culture change across the higher education landscape as a whole.

NOTES

1. There are notable exceptions that consider the effect of collaborative Arts and Humanities research in relation to regional geographies, see Comunian and Gilmore (2015) 'Beyond the Creative Campus: Reflections on the evolving relationship between higher education and the creative economy', King's College London; NWUA (2005) 'The contribution of the North West Higher Education Institutions to the Cultural Life of England's North West', report produced for North West Universities Association; Heather Campbell and Dave Vanderhoven (2016), 'Knowledge that Matters: Realising the Potential of Co-Production', N8/ESRC.

2. As an introduction to this work see: Facer and Enright (2016) 'Creating Living Knowledge: The Connected Communities programme, community university relationships and the participatory turn in the production of knowledge', Bristol: University of Bristol/AHRC Connected Communities programme. This strand of thinking has been developed with great sophistication by those involved in the Connected Communities programme.

3. Hughes et al. (2011) 'Hidden Connections: Knowledge Exchange between the Arts and Humanities and the Private, Public and Third Sectors', AHRC; Abreu M. and Grinevich V. (2014) 'Academic Entrepreneurship in the Creative Arts', *Environment and Planning C 32* (3), pp. 451 – 470.

4. Dovey J., Moreton S., Hargreaves I., Cole T., Davis A., Hodge S., Landsdowne J., Reddington C., Fraser D. S., (2016) 'REACT Report', Bristol: REACT, UWE Bristol, Pervasive Media Studio, Watershed

5. Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska (2016), 'Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture. The AHRC Cultural Value Project'.

6. Facer and Enright (2016) 'Creating Living Knowledge'.

7. Bakhshi et al. (2013) 'A manifesto for the creative economy', London: Nesta

8. Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2016) 'Creative Industries Economic Estimates' https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/523024/Creative_Industries_Economic_Estimates_January_2016_Updated_201605.pdf

9. Parraman et al. (2016) 'The Bristol and Bath by Design Report 2016' http://www.bristolbathdesign.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/05/BBxD_FinalReport_.pdf

10. Pepper (2017) 'Understanding and Building the Creative Economy in the Cardiff Region' http://gw4.ac.uk/understanding-and-building-the-creative-economy-in-the-cardiff-capital-region.

11. Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP (2017) 'The Creative Economy in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly', https://www.cioslep.com/assets/file/Archive/The%20creative%20economy%20in%20Cornwall%20and%20the%20Isles%20of%20Scilly%20Final%20July17.pdf

12. Senior, T. et al. (2016) 'Connecting to Innovate', UWE, Bristol, http://www.creativeworkslondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Connecting-to-Innovate-Final.pdf

13. Dovey, J., Moreton, S., Sparke, S. and Sharpe, B. (2016) 'The practice of cultural ecology: Network connectivity in the creative economy,' *Cultural Trends*, 25 (2), pp 87-103.

14. Moreton, S. and Dovey, J (2014) Curating Collaboration, REACT Hub, Bristol.

15. See esp. the typology in Facer and Enright (2016) 'Creating Living Knowledge'.

16. Academics from the Arts and Humanities are more likely to be involved in teaching and administrative work compared to other disciplinary groups, and therefore have comparatively less time for relationship-building (Hughes et al. 2011, p. 2). Academic seniority appears to a key factor in the likelihood of academics setting up non-monetary collaborations such as student placements etc. (Abreu and Grinevich 2014. 466). The likelihood of an academic working with multiple external partners is increased by them being a professor, older and male (Hughes et al. 2011. 3).

17. MUPI - https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/work-with-us/current-projects/museum-university-partnerships-initiative; SWFed - https://www.swfed.org.uk/about-us/meetings/2017-conference/

18. Strathern M. (2004) 'Commons + Borderlands: Working Papers on the Interdisciplinarity, Accountability and the Flow of Knowledge', Wantage, Oxfordshire: Sean Kingston Publishing.

19. Facer and Enright (2016) 'Creating Living Knowledge'.

20. Facer K. and Pahl K. (2017) 'Understanding Collaborative Research Practices: a Lexicon' in Facer and Pahl (eds) *Valuing Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research: Beyond Impact*. Bristol: Policy Press p. 224.

21. Charles Forsdick, at the workshop 'Bridging the Gap: Co-Production Of Research In Modern Languages', June 9th, 2017. See http://translatingcultures.org.uk/

22. Discussion of the "public idea of language" was launched by Mary Lousie Pratt as President of the Modern Language Association, 2003.

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pp.17-19 Bridging the Gap workshop at Dyrham Park. Elizabeth Haines and Nicola Thomas.
pp.20-22 Bridging the Gap embedded researcher workshop at Sherborne. Scott Farlow.
p. 24 Quipu. The Quipu Project.
p. 27 Bridging the Gap workshop at University of Bath. Christina Horvath.

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