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IS RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

Designing Effective Theory for Research Impact

Challenging our Thinking

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J.E Cairnes Building, NUIG

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Presentation



Goal: To challenge participants to think not just in terms of 'how' they build theory but also 'why' they build theory.

Today lets focus on the following:

- Research is for impact
- Theory is a cognitive artefact
- Designing Theory for Impact
- Future of Theory Building

Stretching our thinking about Theory ...

Research is for Impact

Importance of Research Impact

Two Types of Impacts from Research ...

Academic impact is the “*demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to academic advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory and application.*”



Research impact is “*the demonstrable contribution that research makes to the economy, society, culture, ... the environment, or quality of life, beyond contributions to academia*”.



Australian Government
Australian Research Council



INNOVATION

2020



EXCELLENCE TALENT IMPACT

Ireland's strategy for research and development, science and technology

"Excellent research performed in strategically important areas with relevance and impact for the economy and society ..."

"We are committed to maintaining a focus on the impact and relevance of research ..."

Research in Ireland Inc

The Innovation 2020 strategy will continue to support excellent research across the full continuum and across all disciplines.

But since 2012, a more focused approach has been adopted in the public funding of research and innovation activity.

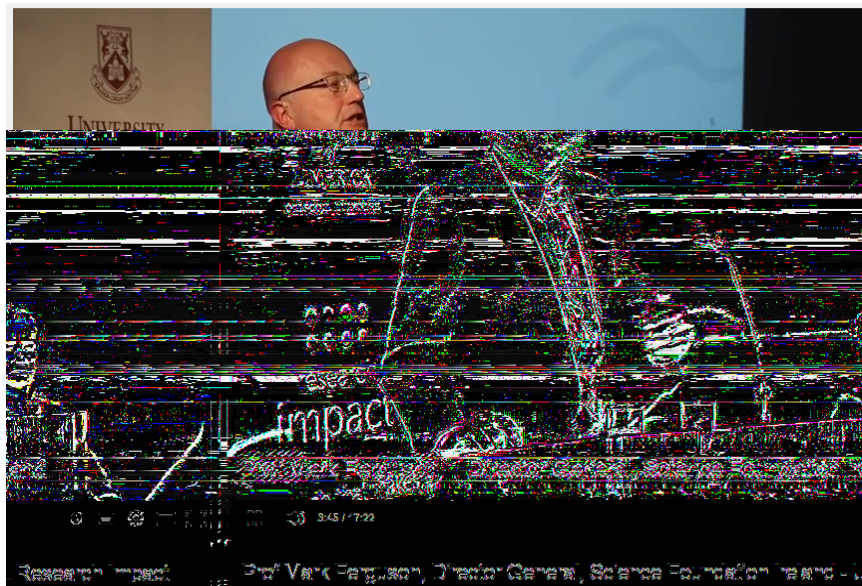
Research prioritisation has concentrated the majority of competitive funding on areas deemed likely to yield greatest economic and societal impact.

"Excellence with impact will be the core funding driver".

Importance of Research Impact ...

*“As with all public spending it is both desirable and necessary to show value for money and within this **demonstrate and articulate the impact and benefits of scientific research projects.** In the current climate of constrained public spending there is an even greater **focus on demonstrating the economic, social and cultural benefits of publicly-funded scientific research to the wider society ...**”.*

*“SFI will continue to focus on **scientific excellence but will now apply an equal focus on impact ... and will use experts in the translation, commercialisation and development of scientific research to evaluate research impact as an important and integral part of our review processes**”*



Watch at ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmSaWs1mCdA>



Making a Research Impact

While the dissemination of research output as publications is very important, in articulating how it will lead to the utilisation of the outputs, applicants should be specific as to why that publication or conference presentation is important, how it ensures the potential beneficiaries have the opportunity to engage with the research, and how this will be followed up.

IMPACT OVERVIEW

SFI Agenda 2020 sets out a vision in which Ireland will, by 2020, be the best country in the world for both scientific research excellence and impact. While SFI continues to focus on scientific excellence, we now apply an equal focus on impact across a portfolio of programmes. SFI defines impact as the “*demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy*” SFI classifies the impacts of scientific research according to 8 pillars which are underpinned by 3 thematic areas (see diagram below) SFI defined this framework as part of the Small Advanced Economies Initiative “*Broadening the Scope of Impact*”



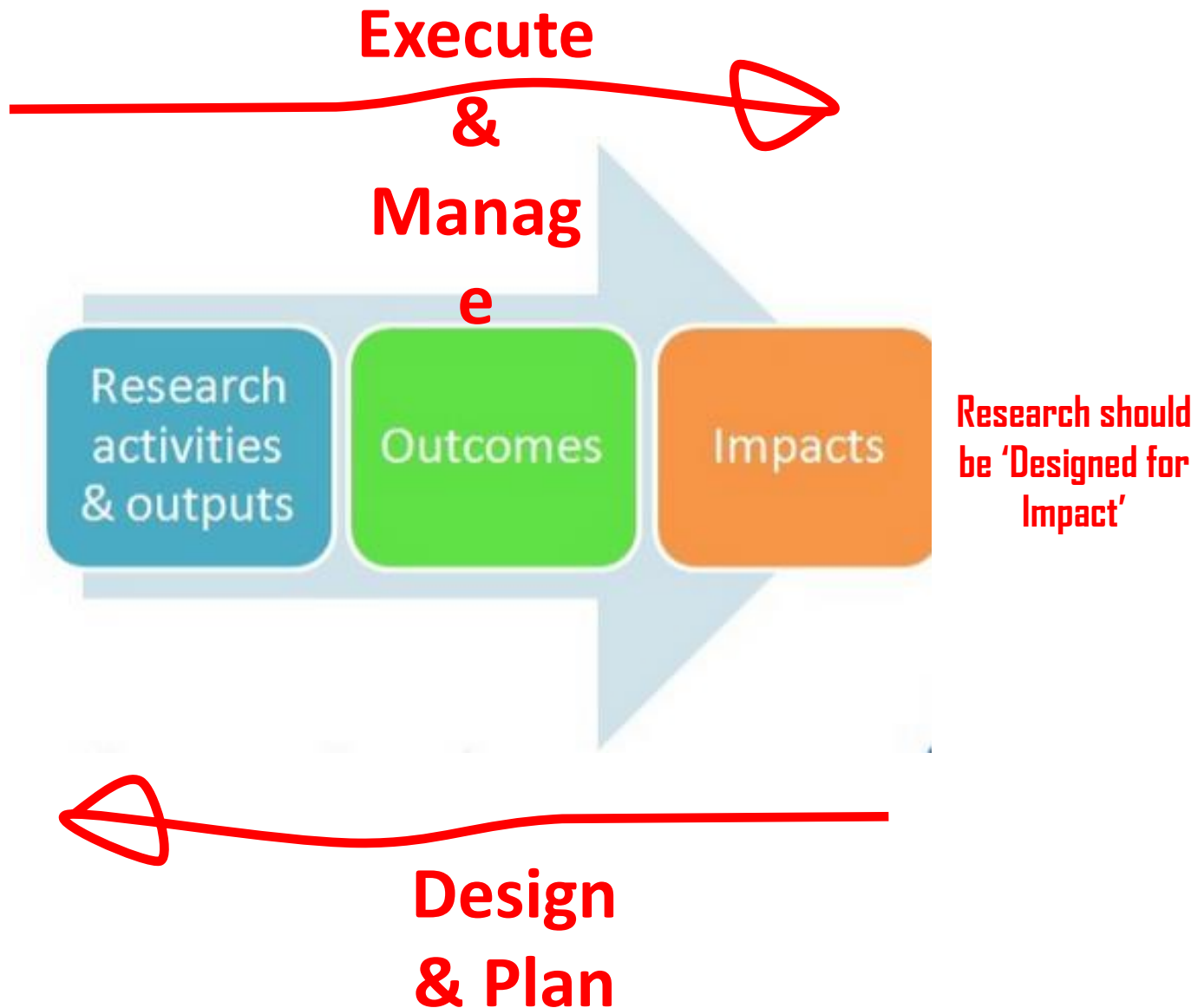
Where do the priorities lay?



How many mentions of the following words in 36 Pages ...

Citation	1
Publication	5
Impact	circa 30

The Research Value Chain ...



Research Impact Statements ...

*“**Impact statements** should be written primarily in lay non-technical language, be as specific and comprehensive as possible and cover potential impacts by answering the following questions:*

- ***Who will benefit from this research?***
- ***How will they benefit from this research?***

Rethinking Theory

Role of Effective Theory

Nature of Theory

Theory and theoretical knowledge are human ***creations*** rather than ***discoveries***. The resulting theories have an existence separate from the subjective understanding of individuals.



Source: <http://mw2.google.com/mw-panoramio/photos/medium/8107739.jpg>



Source: <https://corkarchaeologist.wordpress.com/about/publications/>

The 'Functional' Perspective

Theory describes, explains and predicts a phenomenon of interest.

The quality of the theory is derived from the accuracy of its relationships as well as the domain or extent of the explanations and predictions.

**Good
Theory**

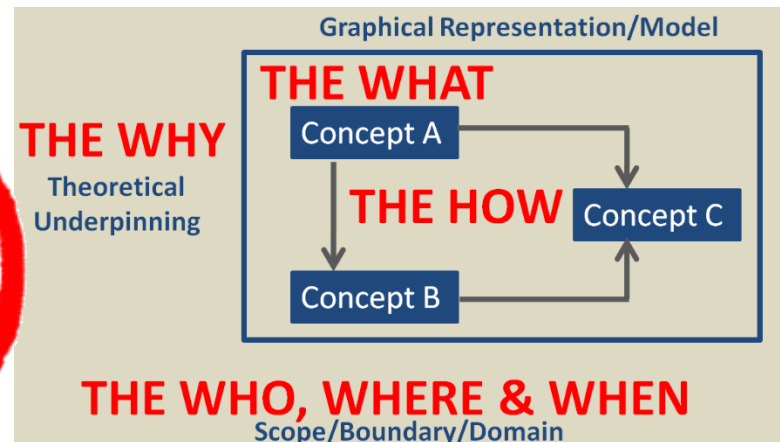


Source: <http://static.ibsrv.net/car-pictures/used-car-prices/used-car-engine-price.jpg>

The 'Structural' Perspective

A theory consists of common features:

- (i) factors/constructs (*The What*)
- (ii) relationships (*The How*)
- (iii) theoretical underpinning (*The Why*),
- (iv) scope/boundary/domain (*The Who, Where & When*),

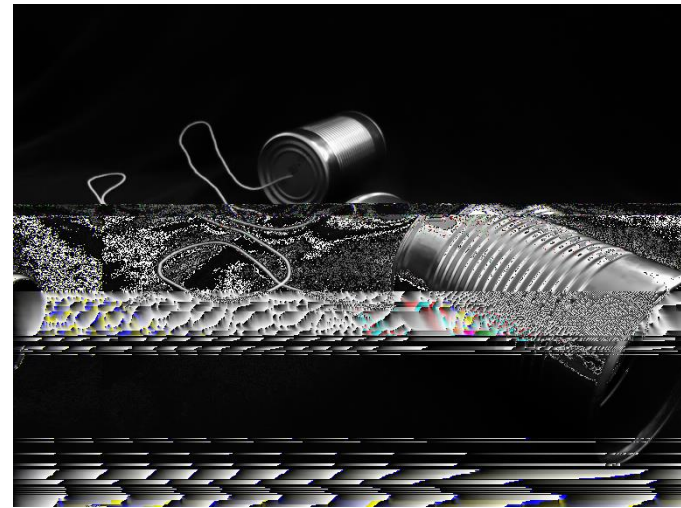


**Theory &
Not-Theory**

The 'Communication' Perspective

Theory communicates the intricacies of a phenomenon to others.

But communication depends on the effectiveness of knowledge production and knowledge translation.



Source: http://www.pxleyes.com/images/contests/communication-means-2/fullsize/First-communication-4fcd0126d49ea_hires.jpg

But who are the consumers of Theory

As scholars it is our central mission to develop theories that both contribute knowledge to the academic discipline (i.e. our internal stakeholders) **and** apply that knowledge to practice (i.e. our external stakeholders) (c.f. Simon 1967).

Research is salient to the internal stakeholders if it adds to the current theoretical frameworks of the discipline; and to the external stakeholders if it solves the real life problems faced by practitioners (Bakshi and Krishna 2007).



Source:
<http://blog.lionbridge.com/translation/files/2013/08/Translate-Button-White.jpg>

The 'Cognitive' Perspective

Both the production and consumption of theories is not straightforward owing to:

- (1) the heterogeneity of those producing and consuming the research;
- (2) the cognitive limitations of the human mind;
- (3) the ineffective cognitive designs of the theories.

These three factors have limited the impact of our theories and they raise serious questions as to how theories should be produced in order to be consumed more effectively.



Source: <http://blog.ganderson.us/wp-content/gla/uploads/2010/06/YinYang-economy.jpg>

**Effective
Theory**

Effective Theory

Effective theory is theory appropriate in both its presentation and content for its purpose and intended audience.

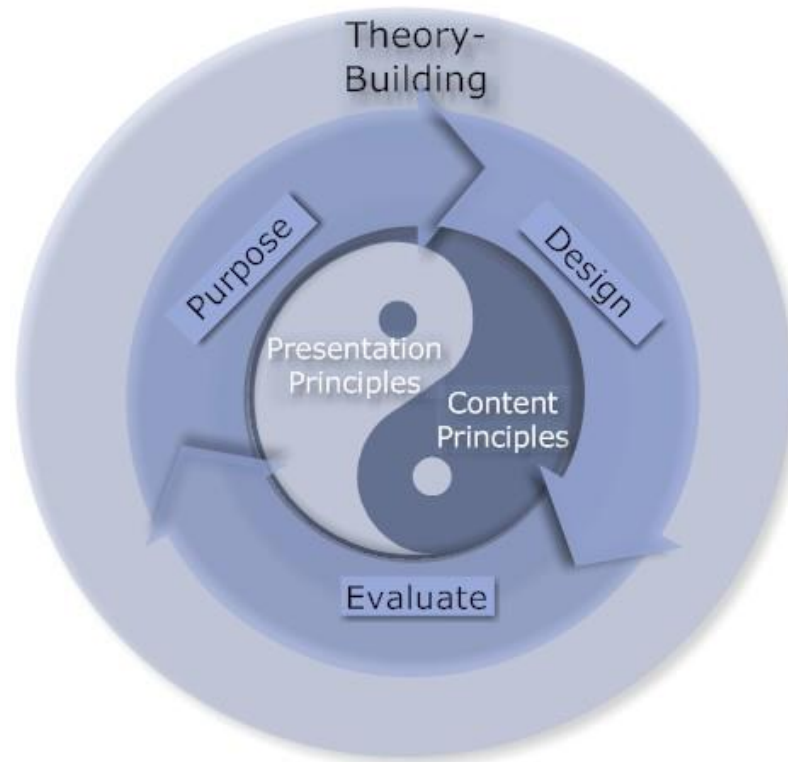
The effectiveness of theory is therefore detected from its cognitive impact on the audience. Effective theory focuses on usefulness.



Source:
https://happeningpeople.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/istock_000017439285_extrasmall_team-effectiveness.jpg

Effective Theory Building

Theory Building is inherently iterative and incremental consisting of “... *the purposeful process or recurring cycle by which coherent descriptions, explanations, and representations of observed or experienced phenomena are generated, verified, and refined*” (Lynham 2000 p. 161).



Designing for Research Impact

The search for impact

Mindset of a Designer



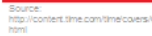
Source: <http://www.aggsbach.de/2012/09/black-basalt-handaxe/>

Humble
Empathic
Mind of novice
Facilitatory
Embrace messiness
Embrace complexity
Acceptance of ambiguity
Focus on value creation
Use of prototyping
Use of evaluating
Tolerant of failure

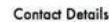
Designing for Research Impact

So What?

Why? It is a game about imagination, whose purpose is to think expansively around an ideal future state for the organization; it's an exercise in visioning the future impact of an opportunity. This game is worth playing because it not only encourages people to "think big," but also actually plants the seeds for a future that perhaps wasn't possible before the game was played.



So What?




2000



Why? This game encourages conversation about what really matters. It constrains conversation to a specific format to boost productivity of discussion. It creates a common, tagline touchstone that communicates a shared product vision.

Drill from 'The What' into 'The Wow?'

Research Game: Creating a Research Value Proposition



My research provides:

To:

In order to:


That is different in that:

Outputs

Stakeholder(s)

Purpose of outputs

Differentiators



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Wow?

Research Purpose

The title of my research is:

My research addresses the question of:

Research Title

Research Question

RXF Worksheet

Impact

If successful the impact of the research will be to:

Even if unsuccessful the impact of the research will still be to:

The limitations of my research are:

The next steps after my research are:

Impact factors

Impact factors

Limitations

Future Directions

RXF Worksheet

Lessons Learnt

What I learnt most from my research was:

What others can learnt most from my research is:

Personal Lessons

External Lessons

RXF Worksheet

Research Game: Extracting the Research Value Proposition



My research provides:

Outputs

To:

Stakeholder(s)

In order to:

Purpose of outputs

That is different in that:

Differentiators



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Practice communicating 'The Wow'?

Research Game: Create the Slidedeck



Prompt:
Use a single sheet
of flip chart paper
and fold twice over.
Use each panel as
a slide



Create a paper-based
slide-deck to include the
following slides:

1. The hook
2. The problem
3. The size
4. The solution
5. The research
6. The 'how'
7. The team
8. ...



Putting it together

Finally move to ‘The How?’

Research Game: Plan your Pathway to Value ...



Resources		Research Impact Pathway			Results
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Benefits	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Income Research Execution Background IP Infrastructure Collections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Work and Training Workshop/Conference Organizing Facility Use Membership of Learned Societies and Academies Community and Stakeholder Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publications including Peer-Reviewed Publications Additions to National Collections New IP: Patents and Inventions Policy Briefings Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial Products, Licenses and Revenue New Companies – Spin-offs, Start Ups or Joint Ventures Job Creation Implementation of Programs and Policy Citations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic, Health, Social, Cultural, Environmental, National Security, Quality of Life, Public Policy or Services Higher Quality Workforce Job Creation Risk Reduction in Decision Making 	<p>Research Planning</p>



How?

The Future of Theory

The search for useful actionable answers

Science is increasingly a Team Sport ...

Science is entering a phase when “*facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high, and decisions urgent*” (Ravetz, 2004 p. 3). In the future “*assessment of scientific work cannot be left to scientists alone – for in the face of acute uncertainties and unfathomable risks, they are amateurs too*” (Sardar, 2000). Instead there must be an ‘*extended peer community*’, which inevitably leads to a democratization of science (Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1993). This resonates clearly with Snow’s (1964) earlier vision of a Third Culture, which would have the potential to fuse knowledge from practice and science in truly creative ways but primarily through state-of-the-art technology (Sui, 2004). The recent history of cartography (and in particular the advent of visualisation) can be viewed in the context of this new paradigm (ibid).

Interactive Theory

Interactive theories, unlike normal theories, are knowledge generation (rather than knowledge reproduction) tools that support both reflection and articulation - the cornerstones of knowledge construction.

Table 42: Differences between Normal Theory and Interactive Theory

	<i>Normal Theory</i>	<i>Interactive Theory</i>
	Theory design	Theory use
	Knowledge presentation	Knowledge generation
	Static and public	Dynamic and private
	Presents/communicates public knowledge to describe, explain, predict, and prescribe a phenomenon to a public audience. The audience is presented with a static artefact (often paper based) which is the incarnation of the theory.	Generation of private knowledge through the user exploring a phenomenon. The user interacts with a technical artefact to build a situation-aware theory from a base image.
Theory-Building Process	The theory is produced a priori by a scholar and consumed by an audience. Map-making and map use is separated by time and place. The knowledge is, therefore, frozen at the time the theory is produced.	The base image is produced a priori by a scholar. The theory is co-produced by the user through overlaying the base image with private situation-specific knowledge. The resulting theory can be shared with others. Knowledge generation and consumption is largely simultaneous and real-time.
Role of Technology	Technology is important in the research process and also in the distribution of the theory but less so in its use.	Technology is critical to enabling interactivity between the image and the user. Interactive theory is only made possible by advances in technology.



Source: <http://funnyshit.com.au/img/not-my-job-redux.jpg>

*Doing things right versus
doing the right things?*

Many Thanks

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