

SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) – SCIENTIFIC REPORT

The STSM applicant submits this report for approval to the STSM coordinator

Action number: CA15137

STSM title: *Virtue model for research impact in the humanities*

STSM start and end date: 28/01/2018 to 10/02/2018

Grantee name: INGENIO (CSIC-UPV) (Valencia, Spain)

PURPOSE OF THE STSM/

The aim of the proposed STSM is to:

- 1) analyse cases of research impacts in the humanities through the lens of *social capacities* (and epistemic virtues);
- 2) develop the idea of social capacities (and epistemic virtues) by testing them against real cases of research impact.

Impact and evaluation of research in the humanities has been the subject of several recent publications. A common theme is the need for a re-evaluation of how the humanities are evaluated, as well as for research on the effects of evaluation practices on the humanities. Another important idea is that this re-evaluation should consider the nature of the public value of the humanities. The dominant model of research evaluation has as its focus societal economic benefits of research, a focus humanities scholars have mostly been uncomfortable with. One of the main tools of research evaluation, bibliometric analysis, is problematic – to say the least – for the humanities. As the policy and practice of research evaluations influences the way research is conducted there is a potential danger that the inherent value of the humanities will be eroded and their value to society diminished *through evaluation*. In a recent conference paper, I approached this question from two sides.

The first approach was to look closer at the definition of the public value of research in the arts and humanities proposed in Benneworth, Gulbrandsen & Hazelkorn (eds.) (2016) *The Impact and Future of Arts and Humanities Research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan):

the circulation of research in networks to users with identifiable interactions creating things that make a good society as public benefits from private assets

A fundamental idea behind this definition is that of “social capacities” as developed through research in the humanities. There is an important *local* aspect to this definition, recognized e.g. by UNESCO in its program on Social Transformations. According to UNESCO the value of humanities (through research and teaching) for positive social transformations is found in the capacities developed in individuals and societies to deal with external and internal changes (e.g. climate change, poverty). The public benefit in this case is not economic but a better functioning society overall.

The second approach was to look at this issue through the lens of virtue epistemology and especially through the work of Linda Zagzebski and Miranda Fricker. The Icelandic philosopher and former rector of

the University of Iceland, Páll Skúlason, has argued that the main responsibility of a university is to develop epistemic virtues in academics and students and thereby also in societies I attempted to explore this idea of epistemic virtues in relation to social capacities with the aim of clarifying the latter concept.

Based on this analysis I intend to explore cases of research impacts in the humanities (collected in WP2 of ENRESSH) to test and develop the framework.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSMS

The work in Valencia proceeded in several layers. I. Reading and analysis of work on societal impact, social capacities and capabilities; II. Discussions with scholars in INGENIO on impact, especially societal impact, and capabilities; III. Analysis of case stories of impacts in the humanities, collected within ENRESSH; IV. Presentation of some key ideas and questions at a research seminar in INGENIO; V. Plans for further work.

I. Following suggestions by the host and other scholars at INGENIO the grantee read selected papers and studies on societal impact, social capacities and the capabilities approach, particularly as it has been used to analyse the societal impact of universities. Through this reading (and discussions) the focus of the research moved somewhat from ideas based on epistemic virtues and epistemic justice to theories of capabilities and the link between the two.

II. The grantee had a number of fruitful discussions with the host, Elena Castro Martínez, on the topic of the STSM and a draft paper the grantee is developing for a special section in *Research Evaluation*. He also met Paul Benneworth and Julia Olmos Peñuela do discuss the draft paper and the STSM work. In addition, he met and discussed the topic of the STSM and in particular theories of capabilities with Félix Lozano Aguilar and Alejandra Boni Aristizabal. All these discussions, as well as other less formal discussions at INGENIO, have opened up possibilities for future collaboration.

III. Large portion of the time spent on the STSM was focused on reading and analyzing case studies selected in WP2 in ENRESSH. The cases, impact stories, were read with a view to understand the actual or intended impact as reported by the scholars themselves. About 27 of the 61 cases are within, or include, the humanities (based on an inclusive understanding of humanities) and 10 of those were used in the seminar presentation, plus two from the social sciences. The work followed two previous STSMS that also worked on the cases, by Stefan de Jong and Agn e Girkontait e, and their scientific reports were very valuable to this STSM.

IV. Thursday 8 February the grantee presented his ideas and findings at a research seminar in INGENIO. The title of the presentation was: "Capabilities, epistemic justice and the impact of humanities". The presentation focused on possibilities of using theories of epistemic justice and capabilities to understand impact of research, particularly in the humanities, stressing ideas of epistemic capabilities. A tentative attempt was made to apply this approach to the ENRESSH cases with promising results.

V. Plans for further work are described in the chapter on Future collaborations.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED

The main results were threefold. I. Theoretical (on the concept of societal impact). II. Practical (on organising current and future research); III. Developmental (on new directions of research and collaboration).

I. Readings and discussions at INGENIO have led to clarifications on the following points: a) How to position the current theoretical research within the scholarly debate on societal impact; b) how the

approach relates to the humanities in particular; c) how it may apply to the debate on impact in general; d) how the understanding of impact through capabilities could be tested by the ENRESSH cases, i.e. Nussbaum's fixed list of capabilities and Sen's context dependent version of capabilities; e) how to connect the theory of epistemic justice to societal impacts; f) how the theory of epistemic justice can work with capabilities to explain societal impact. In short, the work at INGENIO suggested how questions of impact can be linked to value, as societal impact is inseparable from value.

II. The grantee discussed a draft paper, to be sent to *Research Evaluation*, and his ideas for future research at INGENIO. The discussion led to important clarifications and a clear distinction between two different articles. The article already drafted will focus on theoretical aspects of defining and understanding societal impact. An attempt is made to elaborate this concept using theories in virtue epistemology, theories of epistemic justice, of epistemic capabilities and of capabilities in general. This is followed by suggestions for further research and some policy recommendations concerning humanities and impact. A second article is planned, written in collaboration with Elena Castro Martínez, Julia Olmos Peñuela and Paul Benneworth (possibly more), will be based on a close analysis of a number of impact cases to test and develop the theoretical approach in the first article. Research at INGENIO demonstrated a need to dig deeper into the case studies of ENRESSH.

III. At INGENIO the grantee had fruitful discussions about the capabilities approach and its application to research and education policy. This opens new possibilities for research on societal impacts and new contexts of application.

FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)

Plans for future collaboration is mainly, and concretely, on two topics. I. Further case studies to test the theoretical approach; II. Theoretical work on capabilities and impact.

I. In collaboration with Elena Castro Martínez, Julia Olmos Peñuela, Paul Benneworth and possibly others the intention is to revisit a sample of the ENRESSH case studies and gather further evidence on the cases. The focus will be on the actual and intended research impacts. Through a new questionnaire and/or interviews both researchers and stakeholders (in cases where they are easily identified) will be asked to explain and demonstrate where possible the societal impact of their research. The research will be developed based on the theoretical approach of the grantee and will potentially result in an article in a leading journal on research evaluation and policy.

II. More long term the grantee intends to develop further his work on capabilities and impact based on work by Félix Lozano Aguilar and Alejandra Boni Aristizabal. Prior to his visit to INGENIO the grantee was unaware of the work at the institute by these scholars on capabilities in higher education and development.