

# Documenting Impact

## An Impact Case Study of Anthropological Collaboration in Tobacco Control

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article we consider the ‘impact case study’ (ICS) as a specific kind of document, one which, as part of the U.K.’s Research Excellence Framework (REF), enforces a common template for the description and measurement of the social and economic effects of research in U.K. higher education. We track the development of an ICS describing anthropological research in tobacco control which, after many iterations, was not submitted as part of the REF. We ask ‘what is impact?’ in cases where anthropological research is based on principles of collaboration and serendipity rather than the mechanistic ‘research > translation > impact > measurement’ model which an ICS is expected to follow. What is included and what excluded by the strictures of such a model? We are generally supportive of the impact agenda, feeling that university resources and activities have a vital role to play in progressive social change. However, the way ‘impact’ is recorded, appraised and measured in an ICS only captures a small proportion of the effects of anthropological research, and encourages particular forms of public engagement while discounting others.

**KEYWORDS:** anthropology, collaborative research, impact case study, research impact, tobacco control

### The Impact Case Study as a Documentary Form

The inclusion of ‘impact’ as an element in the latest iteration of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the U.K. government’s ongoing programme to assess the quality of research in higher education, caught some academics by surprise. It reflects global trends towards changing governance arrangements and increasing accountability in higher education, which has involved in its turn a move from assessing the quality of research per se towards an increasing interest in its effects (as encapsulated by the term ‘impact’) on wider society. In the U.K., ‘impact’ in this sense is defined by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) as ‘an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services,

health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia’ (HEFCE 2011: 26, 42). The impacts of research on the advancement of academic knowledge within the higher education sector itself, and on learning and teaching are explicitly excluded, although their importance is acknowledged in other official documents such as the U.K. Research Councils’ ‘Pathways to Impact’ (RCUK n.d.).

Impact (in REF terms) is important to universities in the U.K. because it comprises 20 per cent of the total score that each department (or ‘Unit of Assessment’) can achieve from its REF submission. The other two parts are 65 per cent based on the top four academic works produced by each submitted member of academic staff, and 15 per cent on ‘research environment’ (e.g. support provided for researchers, seminar programmes, training opportunities, and PhD student



numbers). Impact has been recorded and analysed by the REF 2014 in the form of a specific kind of document, the impact case study (ICS). As well as their direct contribution to the total score, ICSs were also significant because a Unit was permitted to submit no more than five full-time members of staff or their equivalents per ICS. The ICS thus represents an important emerging trend in the ongoing development of technologies of accountability in higher education over the past two decades, framed in the language of 'audit culture' (Power 1997; Shore and Wright 1999; Strathern 2000). It is the latest financial imperative for universities in general (and anthropology as a discipline) to adhere to the agenda for the neoliberal restructuring of the University (Mitchell and Dyck 2014; Shore 2009, 2010).

It is not our intention to critique the impact agenda in higher education per se. Like Pain et al. (2011), we support the notion that university resources and activities have a vital role to play in progressive social change. Rather, we want to investigate how the ICS even in its short history has become mutually constitutive of practices. We do this by charting the 'document career' (Harper 1997) of one such ICS, based on our anthropological research in tobacco control. Prior (2008) argues for the repositioning of documents in social research with greater acknowledgement of their vitality and potentiality. Freeman and Maybin (2011) distinguish forms, records and prescriptions as three kinds of document, which are all directed towards action. Records seek to capture past activities and present them for future inspection, while prescriptions attempt to direct future actions, while making it possible to refer in future to what was agreed in the past. The function of a form, however, is to synchronise: 'to make the different times (and spaces) of its completion equivalent or irrelevant' (ibid.: 160). All three are examples of artefacts that are mutually constitutive of practices, in that 'practices generate artefacts, which in turn structure practices ... Indeed, it may even be the very existence of the object, its normal presence, that leads actors to think and act on, with, through or around it: the artefact *requires* the practice, which in turn requires the artefact' (ibid.: 165). Using Freeman and Maybin's analytical framework, we shall first consider the ICS as a form of document, and will then go on to record the processes of the production and reception of our own ICS. In undertaking this 'document ethnography' we confront the propensity for documents to 'strip away context' (Heimer in Riles 2006: 9) and note, also following Riles, how they can change 'social and material form' (ibid.: 14). Our approach aims to recontextualise our particular docu-

ment (the ICS), showing how the politics and power relations involved in its production and reception might lead to downplaying or discounting certain dimensions of impact in anthropological research while playing up the weight and significance of others.

## The ICS as Artefact

We first became acquainted with the contours of an ICS with the unveiling of the 'ICS template' in February 2012. Under the banner heading 'REF2014' (in turquoise blue and white) was a form with five boxed sections to be completed. The expected amount of content intended for each was included in brackets after each numbered subheading:

1. **Summary of the impact** (indicative maximum 100 words)
2. **Underpinning research** (indicative maximum 500 words)
3. **References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)
4. **Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)
5. **Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

A helpful checklist was provided with the form, based on the criteria for ICSs laid down by the REF guidance documents, and with the warning '*it is important that this is adhered to as case studies not meeting the requirements will be graded "unclassified"*' [italics in the original]. Authors and readers were required to check that the subject matter was eligible, both generally and in terms of the specific requirements of the relevant subject panel (in our case, Anthropology). The underpinning research (section 2) had to have been carried out between 1 January 1993 and 31 July 2013, while the associated 'outputs' had to have been produced between 1 January 2008 and 31 December 2013. We had to be able to show that the underpinning research had been carried out at our University and that it had made a 'distinct and material contribution to the impact'. References had to be of a 'quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour' (glossed as 2\* or above in REF terms) and a rationale for such an attribution of excellence had to be provided. The impact, meanwhile (section 4), had to have been felt between 1 January 2008 and 31 July 2013, and its 'reach', 'significance' and 'beneficiaries' had to be adequately explained. Two essential issues regarding the evidence provided were (1) that it was

'independently verifiable' and that (2) the words and references included should occupy a maximum of four pages. The checklist concluded with a section added by our own University which asked whether the author or reader felt there was scope for a 'professional support department' to help with data collection and investigation concerning impact.

We set to completing these sections with alacrity, giving our first draft the title 'Tobacco control: new institutional forms and public engagement'. Our initial impact summary went as follows:

Using collaborative, participatory action and co-inquiry models of research, Durham University has worked with Fresh Smoke Free North East and other external partners recording, evaluating and supporting the work of the first dedicated tobacco control office in the country. This collaboration has generated a co-produced self-appraisal toolkit for use by local alliances, has contributed to the development of a world-first illicit tobacco programme across the North of England, and has led to plans for the development of an English language, adapted version of a Uruguayan exhibition designed to discourage young people from smoking.

This we felt summarised the multiplicity of outcomes deriving from our methodological approach, which we have described elsewhere as 'being embedded' (Lewis and Russell 2011). The three particular 'impacts' we wanted to highlight as arising out of our participatory research models were a 'toolkit' that could be used by local tobacco control alliances, the development of the world's first illicit tobacco programme, and plans for an exhibition to discourage young people from smoking. We shall now go on to describe these three elements in more detail, so that their 'fit' or otherwise with the 'impact agenda' as represented by the ICS can be better appreciated.

## Ethnographic Realities

### *Toolkits in Tobacco Control*

When it was established in 2005, Fresh Smoke Free North East (FreshNE) was the first tobacco control office in the U.K. It was unique in bringing together smoking cessation, health education and lobbying work under one dedicated umbrella organisation (Russell et al. 2009). The involvement of the Anthropology Department at our University was secured through AR being appointed to the Intelligence Subcommittee of the newly formed organisation in 2006. This coincided with the inauguration of the National Prevention Research Initiative (NPRI), a consortium

of research councils and charity organisations that came together in order to fund more research aimed at preventing the 'big killer' diseases – heart disease, cancer and diabetes. FreshNE provided an opportunity for a 'natural experiment' to look at whether the presence of a tobacco control office had an appreciable effect on smoking rates in the North East of England compared to the country as a whole. The multidisciplinary, collaborative research project funded by the NPRI aimed to chart the history, ways of working and early outcomes of FreshNE using a largely qualitative methodology, backed up by routinely collected quantitative data.

During the course of this research, it became apparent that the local alliances, crucial to effective action on tobacco control at the grassroots level, were not all functioning as effectively as they could have been. This led to the development of a local alliance toolkit, in collaboration with staff at FreshNE. This was a self-assessment document for local alliances that assisted in the induction of new members and the retention and galvanisation of existing ones, and was taken up by the Department of Health (DoH) as a model of good practice. SL was appointed honorary consultant to the Tobacco Control National Support Team in October 2007, and the DoH also co-opted her to be a member of the working group for the development of a recommendations document *Excellence in Tobacco Control: 10 High Impact Changes to Achieve Tobacco Control*, which was launched nationally in May 2008. The first of these recommended 'high-impact changes' was 'Work in Partnership'. This drew in particular upon research articles coming out of the NPRI project concerning tobacco control alliances and collaborative working (Heckler and Russell 2008a, 2008b), and on the ongoing ethnographic research being conducted by SL (Lewis and Russell 2011). The specific factors considered to be the basis for successful partnerships were (1) 'a clear but detailed purpose that enables each of the partners to identify the importance of their and their organisation's contribution', (2) 'co-ordination by a "neutral" officer not seen as entirely within the structure and procedures of any one member organisation', and (3) 'dedication of managerial time and attention to developing effective working relationships and a shared sense of mission' (Heckler and Russell 2008b: 14–15).

This was the ethnographic 'outcome' which proved most amenable to inclusion in the final version of the ICS, although it was not necessarily the area in which we felt our impact, in terms of 'reach', 'significance' and 'beneficiaries', had been greatest. As an emergent and essentially collaborative development (Lassiter

2005), it was invidious to attempt to construct 'causal' pathways that could be attributed to academics alone. Yet this is precisely the tack that an ICS pushes its authors to take. We shall now go on to outline the other two areas we included in our first draft ICS before going on to consider the reasons for their eventual exclusion.

### *Illicit Tobacco*

FreshNE was justifiably concerned about the inequalities in smoking uptake and prevalence within the region and the particularly high rates that pertain in disadvantaged communities. Our NPRI project also included a qualitative study in some of those disadvantaged communities, where time was spent talking to residents in working men's clubs, youth clubs, community centres and at smoking cessation sessions. This led on to further research, funded by Cancer Research U.K., with young people in former coal- and steel-industry areas on their attitudes and opinions about smoking. This work not only revealed how easy it was for young people to acquire cut-price illicit tobacco (Lewis and Russell 2013), but also that smokers and buyers of illicit tobacco (young people and adults alike) were generally happy to talk about the illicit trade in their communities. It was not a taboo subject.

Feeding back this information to FreshNE highlighted both the significance of smuggling as an 'elephant in the room' of tobacco control efforts (since 'cheap and illicit' was a major disincentive for people to quit in the communities where its prevalence was greatest) and, significantly, opened up the possibility of a future public-facing media campaign against the trade. Helping to raise the profile of illicit tobacco as a national problem for tobacco control, in March 2008 SL accompanied the Director of FreshNE to a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Tobacco or Health, to present the research findings on contraband and counterfeit tobacco and its impact on young people.

A second successful application to the NPRI obtained further funding to look at the supply side of tobacco smuggling. This involved interviews with customs and excise officers about recent cases of tobacco smuggling both in the North East and nationally. Taken together, the research and related collaborative activity on illicit tobacco contributed significantly to the development and launch in July 2009 of the *North of England Illicit Tobacco Programme*, a world-first in multi-agency partnership working in this field. SL contributed to early development meetings of the Programme and we later managed the ethnographic elements of a multidisciplinary, mixed-method eval-

uation of the ways of working and effectiveness of the programme, under the auspices of the U.K. Centre for Tobacco Control Studies (McNeill et al. 2014).

We would probably regard this as the area in which our research involvement with FreshNE had the greatest long-term impact. Our NPRI study occurred at a crucial point in FreshNE's development, after the success of the Smokefree Public Places legislation in 2007. This had been a dynamic and highly charged lobbying period but had led to the risk of everyone feeling that tobacco control was a case of 'job done', when in fact for the FreshNE team it was only just 'job beginning'. Illicit tobacco was, in policy and practice terms, the 'next big thing' for FreshNE to tackle. However, we were only directly involved in what might be termed the seeding of the ideas for the programme – a 'water cooler' conversation here, a remark to the deputy director of ASH (Action on Smoking and Health, the lobbying organisation that ended up being very supportive of the new Programme) there. Such nebulous inputs, despite being the stuff of ethnographic legend and absolutely crucial in gestational terms, lack any evidence that might be termed 'independently verifiable'. Hence the impact of our work on the illicit programme was dropped from the final version of the ICS.

### *Preventing Uptake Amongst Young People – 'Respira Uruguay'*

'Respira Uruguay' is a 150m<sup>2</sup> exhibition located in the 'Espacio Ciencia' ('Science Space'), Uruguay's only science education centre. Located in the capital, Montevideo, it uses a variety of different interactive and multisensory components to educate children, young people and other visitors about the health and other consequences of smoking, in an engaging and enjoyable way. 'Respira Uruguay' was designed in collaboration with a leading campaign organisation against tobacco in Uruguay, the *Centro de Investigacion para la Epidemia del Tabaquismo* (CIET). The resulting exhibition, officially opened by President Tabaré Vázquez in August 2007, displays the results of a happy marriage between public health expertise and artistic inspiration. The exhibition was the subject of a presentation given by Martha Cambre and others at the 14th Conference on Tobacco or Health held in Mumbai, India, in March 2009. AR and two other research collaborators from the North East of England attended this presentation, and as they filed out of the hall afterwards, they all agreed what a wonderful thing it would be to create an English language version of the exhibition suitable for the North East region.

When AR later discussed the idea with FreshNE they were enthusiastic but suggested that the exhibition as described in the 'Respira Uruguay' video was overly focussed on the health and financial risks to the individual smoker and 'let the tobacco industry off the hook'. Evidence on prevention initiatives (e.g., the influential 'Florida Truth Campaign'; see Sly et al. 2001) shows that knowledge of the tobacco industry's history of dirty tricks, the environmental effects of tobacco production and issues such as the exploitation of child labourers in the tobacco fields of Malawi may make young people think twice about starting smoking. FreshNE also suggested involving young people more explicitly in the design and delivery of the exhibition.

At that time, there were several tobacco control youth advocacy groups in the U.K. (e.g. in Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow, but none in the North East). Of these, Glasgow-based W-WEST ('Why Waste Everything Smoking Tobacco') was looking for a new initiative to champion. W-WEST was a peer-led tobacco control advocacy group of eleven members aged between twelve and nineteen years (smokers and non-smokers) based in Glasgow. AR suggested possibilities for engagement around the Respira Uruguay exhibition. Funding came from AR's Higher Education Academy National Teaching Fellowship in 2010, enabling members of W-WEST and researchers from Durham University to travel to Uruguay to appraise the exhibition and consider the possibility of adapting its design and content for use in the U.K. What resulted was a collaborative project with a group already expert in public engagement on a display that subscribed to the group's aim to instil pro-choice, informed tobacco-awareness amongst young people.

The visit to Montevideo took place from 12–19 February 2012. It involved twelve people – six youth members of W-WEST, two adult health-promotion advisers who work with the group, the authors and two other members of the Smoking Interest Group at Durham University. Three extended visits were made to the Espacio Ciencia during the course of the week, information-sharing and fact-finding meetings were held with CIET, the EU Delegation to Uruguay, the British Embassy, the Instituto Cultural Anglo-Uruguayeno and members of the tobacco control unit at the Ministry of Health. One team member, Megan Wainwright, also recorded a piece about the visit for the Uruguayan breakfast TV programme 'Qualidad de Vida' which was broadcast on 4 March. The 'reversal' (Chambers 1997: Ch7) signified by a Uruguayan initiative potentially transferring to the U.K. rather than, as so often happens in the development field, a U.K. template being transferred to Uruguay, was not

lost on the people we met. However, such intangible influences on national self-esteem are not the stuff of 'impact' in the U.K. sense.

The impact of travelling to Uruguay and participating in a collaborative research project on the young people (both individually and as an advocacy group) is another issue that was hard to capture for ICS purposes. In their reflections on what they had seen, for instance, the young people brought their experience to bear in considering what might need to change if the exhibition were to be adapted for a U.K. or Scottish context. This included, for example, adding elements that had more to do with globalisation or that were global in their scope, such as the role of the tobacco industry in environmental despoliation and the issue of illicit tobacco and its social harms, or aspects relating specifically to the history of smoking and the tobacco industry in Scotland. The observations and insights of the young people were invaluable in setting out what a future exhibition might be like – although of course these would only become 'impactful' if fed into the creation of an actual exhibition, the effects of which can be adequately monitored and evaluated. Sadly, funding for mounting an exhibition proved impossible to come by in financially constrained times. It is much less easy to capture the *impact* that the experience of the visit – presenting their thoughts to staff at the British Embassy, or engaging with exhibition curators and guides at Espacio Ciencia – had on their future activities as an advocacy group, or indeed individually. An inkling of its importance to the group and its members can be surmised from this guest blog for the Scottish Peer Education Network (SPEN), written by the then Vice-Chair of W-WEST, 18-year-old Nicola McFadyen:

In February 2012...all of W-WEST embarked on our greatest adventure yet - we all went to Uruguay, in South America, to visit the Science Centre there, to view their interactive exhibition about smoking, an exhibition that the NHS wanted to redevelop to bring to the Glasgow Science Centre sometime in the near future. The trip as a whole was amazing, we met some truly incredible people and the exhibition was amazing, even if it was entirely different to anything we had expected it to be. Hopefully sometime soon we see the redeveloped exhibition in the Glasgow Science Centre, bearing the W-WEST crest!!

Why should you get involved in W-WEST, I hear you cry?! Because the group is full of some fantastic, friendly people- we're not just a youth group, we're a group of friends as well. The group does some amazing work, and we're getting more and more publicised with every campaign we do; we have in fact been

recognised at an international level more than once!!!  
(20 February 2013; accessed 19 September 2014)

## The ICS: From Reality to Representation

The ethnographic realities outlined above formed the basis for our first ICS draft. The regular workshops held at our University provided feedback on such drafts. The gist of this feedback was that our ICS was too diffuse in its presentation of 'impact'. We were explicit that our participatory and collaborative research methods, based on needs and knowledge gaps identified as the research progressed, aimed to avoid the mechanistic and unidirectional research > translation > impact model. However, this seemed to be the approach favoured and expected by the ICS document template, with its 'underpinning research' followed by 'details of impact' format. How does such an approach work when one's research is based on principles of participation, collaboration and the co-production of knowledge, where serendipity as well as strategy dictates the outcomes, and where 'impact' might be largely intangible or the result of a simple conversation at a water cooler? We were told we should revamp our ICS to present a more straightforward story of a single element of our work. The only element which was regarded as having enough verifiable impact was the work we had done as part of our FreshNE evaluation on partnership working and the self-appraisal Toolkit for local alliances. We were encouraged to elicit more information from our collaborators as evidence concerning the impact of this work.

This latter point raised ethical issues for us, as we think it does (or should) for anyone undertaking qualitative research in the social sciences where research subjects are also the likely targets of assessments of its impact. Qualitative research, particularly that involving long-term fieldwork, is based on relationships. Over the past couple of decades we have entered a brave new world of research ethics review boards established to assess the risks and benefits of research on one's subjects and to ensure issues of 'informed consent' and 'anonymity' are adequately handled. In agreeing to participate in our ongoing research programmes our collaborators had neither consented to subsequent interrogation about the nature and extent of their collaboration, nor agreed to having the results of these enquiries transformed into an ICS and instrumentalised in this way. Furthermore we had qualms about how an assessment of impact would actually be made. Was it right that we (the researchers) should also be the people to ask our collab-

orators to report on the quality of their relationship with us (and ours with them) for the purpose of creating an ICS? What is the likely truth value of information gained in such circumstances? Fortunately our University research office appointed an 'impact assessor' to undertake some of these investigations for us. However, the ethical issue of whether the social relationships of fieldwork should be exploited – in a manner akin to how social relationships are exploited by Tupperware parties (Taylor 1978) for greater corporate profit – remained.

The reception, circulation and dissection of our ICS went through five different cycles. Freeman and Maybin (2011: 163) remind us that since the authorship of policy documents is:

often multiple or 'distributed' [...] this process is imbued with politics, expressing and recreating specific sets of power relations. Policy documents, through their writers and editors, may state truths – or they may suppress, elide or embellish them. The process of writing a statement or briefing, for example, is often a matter of sorting – selecting and ordering – the many truths it might contain. It matters very much, therefore, just who is allowed or tasked to write what and by whom – and this testifies again, above all, to the real or assumed power of the document itself.

While not a policy document, the ICS had a similar role to perform in representing reality in such a way that future projects (or funding) might be realised.

The final version of our ICS, 'signed off' in May 2013, had changed its subtitle from 'new institutional forms and public engagement' to 'maximizing effective local alliances and service delivery'. The 'Summary of the Impact' section went as follows:

Durham University's research made a significant contribution to regional anti-smoking campaigns. Anthropology used the research to inform partnership guidelines and a self-appraisal Toolkit for institutions and local public health alliances that emerged to deal with the 'tobacco epidemic'. Our partnership model was promoted as the primary ingredient for excellence in tobacco control by the Department of Health from 2008 onwards, and the Toolkit was successfully used by local Tobacco Control Alliances. These two pathways to impact allowed Durham University's research to effect major improvements in the way collaborations of tobacco control advocacy groups function.

Gone were references to illicit tobacco or any of the work with young people. Instead, our research impact was said to derive from our 'findings on successful partnerships'. Rather than our local, personal connections, it was the positive influence these findings were

said to have had on ‘the work of U.K. organisations involved in tobacco control’ that were stressed. This was said to have occurred via two ‘pathways to impact’: ‘1) the Department of Health’s Excellence in Tobacco Control Report [...] and 2) a self-appraisal Toolkit that has been used by Tobacco Control Alliances to improve their operational effectiveness’. The results of our impact assessor’s enquiries can be found in the further details provided about the ‘work in partnership’ recommendation of the ‘Excellence in Tobacco Control’ report (even though this was only one of ten ‘high impact changes’ recommended).

The simplification of our ICS – from the multifaceted portrayal of impact to one in which the element most closely following the research > translation > impact > measurement formula – can be seen as an outcome of ‘narrative as reflexive biography’ (Mitchell 2014: 280) in which those items which provide the most coherent ‘projection [from the past] into the future of a trajectory of expected outcomes and events’ are valorised (Binkley 2009: 93). We can see this reduction as the result of Shore’s (2008, 2009) neoliberal governance associated with the REF. However, our contention is that the reasons for the transformation of our ICS have as much to do with the micro-constituents of the documentary form itself as the macro-constituency of its multiple authors operating in a neoliberal governance framework. The issues discussed arise, we would suggest, only because the ICS fits very well with Freeman and Maybin’s analysis of a document with ‘real or assumed power’. A report form we completed at the end of our Uruguay visit to fulfil the conditions for accepting a Santander mobility grant, for example, generated none of the institutional jockeying generated by our ICS.

The ICS, by contrast, was drafted by us, but moulded at departmental and institutional level to conform to multiple interpretations of what was required. We can perhaps see in its various transmutations the over-zealous application of Shore’s apparatus of neoliberal governance, in which a sequentially authored form became the victim of the ‘agency, interests, desires and motivations of individuals, encouraging them to see themselves as active subjects responsible for improving their own conduct’ (Shore 2008: 284). However, by the third or fourth iteration of the ICS, our own enthusiasm and capacity for shaping its narrative structure in an active way undoubtedly waned. We ourselves did some suppressing and embellishing in the first instance, to fit our narrative to the form’s constituent parts but, although the final version still represented something of our work, we felt it was a severely attenuated and anaemic

version of the rich diet of collaboration and participation which in our view had been the real basis for our research impact.

In the final assessment, even this partial account failed, not least because, without a metric to quantify or otherwise support the apparent outcomes, it was deemed too difficult to convince others of their validity. Our ICS was eventually dropped from the portfolio that was used to support the Anthropology department’s REF submission.

## Discussion

We have recounted the document career of our ICS in order to investigate the notion of impact in Anthropology and to consider the limitations placed upon it by the requirements and format of an ICS. We could just shrug our shoulders (as we have done in an institutional sense) and say ‘better luck next time’. Given that ‘underpinning research’ could be anything undertaken within one’s institution since 1993, our own track record was severely limited by the fact that FreshNE as an organisation only came into existence as a researchable entity in 2005 – not much time to be able to demonstrate ‘impact’. Similarly our collaboration with W-WEST – a group formed in 2008 – only began in 2010, on the back of advice from our colleagues in FreshNE concerning the need to involve young people in exhibition analysis and design. In some ways, we were trying to demonstrate ‘impact’ at what were the first stages of what would hopefully, and in normal circumstances, be much longer collaborative and participatory research programmes.

However, collaborative research with grassroots groups and organisations, the preferred option amongst many anthropologists, can be a relatively risky strategy long-term. We had a number of meetings with W-WEST after Uruguay, and gave several joint presentations with them and with the representative from ASH-Scotland who accompanied us to Uruguay. We secured funds for a representative from CIET to come to the U.K. in September 2012 to exchange ideas with ASH-Scotland and with our University about possible further developments. However, in a climate of financial austerity, budgetary cuts, savings and restructurings, the long-term stability of organisations such as W-WEST and even FreshNE is uncertain. The ASH-Scotland representative has now left the organisation and in our most recent communication the health promotion lead responsible for supporting W-WEST in its activities reported ‘unfortunately, W-WEST are no longer together as a group

[...] We are now focussing on the online presence and updating the website as an information hub for young people'. It is much harder to demonstrate the long-term impact of research with organisations that are constantly restructuring or dissolving. Mitchell (2014: 281) writes of the tendency for the impact requirement of REF to recast the past as if intentionally designed to produce impact and to provide 'a vision of the future in which impact is the goal'. Now that impact is established as a significant component of the REF audit process, it is surely significant (and in many respects lamentable) that our University is now encouraging academic staff, post-REF, to do more in terms of responding to government consultations in order to generate 'impact', rather than working with grassroots organisations.

The REF documentation claimed that 'impacts will be assessed in terms of their "reach and significance" regardless of the geographic location in which they occurred, whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally' (HEFCE 2011: 27). However, one might be sceptical about whether local-level collaborations will pass muster in impact terms, particularly when the underpinning research outputs have to be 'recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour' (an indicator that takes no account of anthropology's project to have 'the whole of human society as its field of interest' by working in small, or 'local' places (Eriksen 2001: 1)). Pain et al. (2011) make the point that:

While collaborative participatory and activist research projects may be international and involve a wide range of people and organisations, they often work intensively with local communities and small groups of people. There is no practical or intellectual incompatibility between significant and transformative impacts and research that is deeply engaged at a local level. However, if 'local' becomes synonymous with 'modest impact', then the danger is not simply that some academics and units will remain unrecognised and unrewarded for excellent work, but more perniciously, audit-orientated institutions might actively discourage research that involves 'only' local dialogue, contexts and outcomes (2011: 186).

This could certainly be the case with our research where the outputs relate to purely local and regional organisations and a young people's group based in a single city. However, this is the *modus operandi* of much field research in anthropology – while it can have considerable impact, it is less likely to be of a type that fits easily within the constraints and requirements of an ICS. This is not necessarily a new argument (although the ethnographic particularities presented here are) but it is a point worth re-stating

as the stakes for many universities – and for anthropology as a discipline – are very high.

## Conclusion

In this article we have reflected on the nature of 'impact' in anthropology and the role of the ICS form in dictating what can and cannot be included as valid impacts for REF purposes. We remain committed to collaborative, participatory and embedded research with new innovative groups and organisations in tobacco control, research that in our case led to the development of the local alliance toolkit, the development of a world-first illicit tobacco programme and furtherance of ideas for an exhibition designed to increase tobacco-awareness – even though the final version of the ICS created for REF purposes was only able to include the first of these. Yet the rest also serve to demonstrate the multiple impacts of collaborative and participatory research in anthropology. This is as much about collaborative research as it is about ethnography. A particularly disquieting aspect of the ICS template and process is how this collaborative context was relentlessly stripped away – the very elements which we have argued made our research impactful in the first place! The ICS severely constrains presentation of some forms of impact and overplays others. When working with new and emergent initiatives in public health, impact can be hard to measure. However, we stand by the conclusion to one of the first drafts of our ICS:

Evidence from North East England is highly suggestive of the effectiveness of research-based tobacco control policies. Between the launch of Fresh in 2005 and 2009, smoking rates that were the highest in the country (29%) fell faster than anywhere else in England and are now in line with all-England figures. Rates of smoking-related mortality have declined by 21% during the same period. This translates to 1,540 lives saved per year. Fresh won the Chief Medical Officer's first gold medal award for public health in 2009, an important acknowledgement of Fresh's contribution to national tobacco strategies. Its Director attributes this achievement in large part to the ongoing research collaboration with the Department of Anthropology at Durham University.

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## Notes

1. An English language video of the Espacio Ciencia exhibit can be seen on [http://latu21.latu.org.uy/espacio\\_ciencia/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=127%3Avideos&catid=42%3Aexhibiciones&Itemid=101](http://latu21.latu.org.uy/espacio_ciencia/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=127%3Avideos&catid=42%3Aexhibiciones&Itemid=101). See also Cambre in León-Castellá (2009).

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