Addressing the Impact of SSH

Rethinking the Role of Social SSH in H2020: Towards a reflective and generative perspective

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Introduction: impact of SSH

- UK growing body of work on impact: impact of research projects; postgraduate research; impact case studies for the UK Research Excellence Framework.

- Parallel debates regarding valorisation in France & The Netherlands ; in US on 'relevance', and public engagement and outreach in Australia and New Zealand is being recast as impact.

- In my presentation I focus on (1) the impact of research projects, using example of research funded by Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and (2) address SSH and multi-disciplinarity, again with a UK example
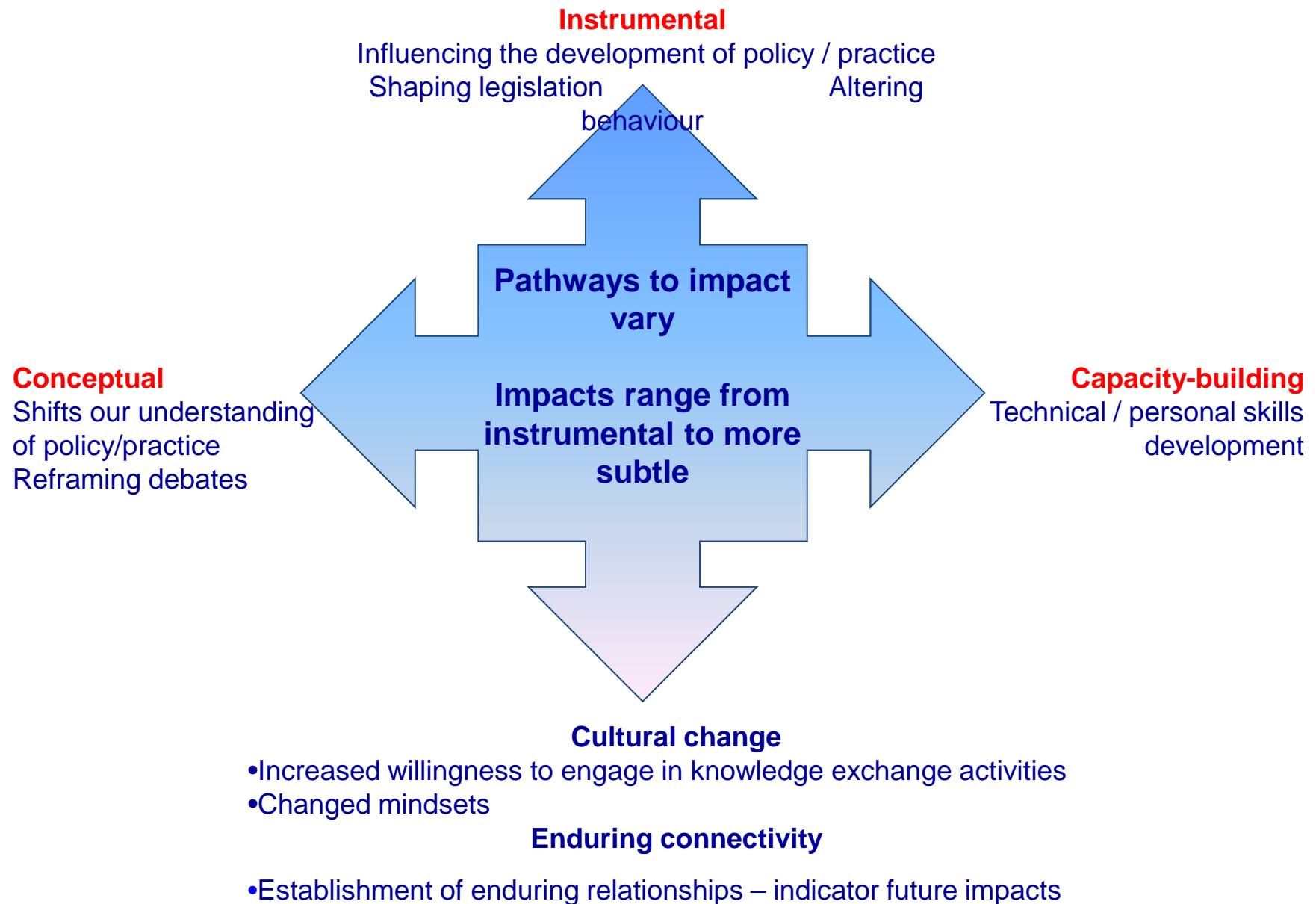
What do we mean by impact?

- For ESRC-funded research, scientific excellence and impact are linked

    Impact is: "The demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy"
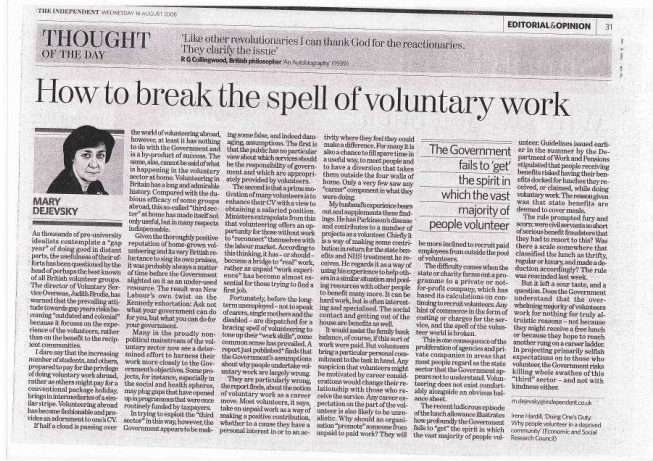
- Academic impact a taken PLUS (where appropriate)

- Economic and societal impact which can be categorised as:

- Instrumental

- Conceptual and/or

- Capacity building (Nutley et al, 2007)

Instrumental
Influencing the development of policy / practice
Shaping legislation   Altering
behaviour

Pathways to impact vary

Impacts range from instrumental to more subtle

Conceptual
Shifts our understanding
of policy/practice
Reframing debates

Capacity-building
Technical / personal skills
development

Cultural change
•Increased willingness to engage in knowledge exchange activities
•Changed mindsets

Enduring connectivity

•Establishment of enduring relationships – indicator future impacts

Impact case study – volunteering and community building

- Volunteering and employability

- Volunteering to make a difference in the community

- Findings used by fieldwork organisations; fed into guidance booklet for Disability Rights Commission; national launch of volunteering toolkit

Multi-disciplinarity and SSH

- Challenges are interdisciplinary and international in their reach, our pressing challenges do not necessarily recognise disciplinary and geographical boundaries.

- SSH offer ways of seeing the world, of appreciating and responding to the complex challenges facing economies and societies.

- SSH epistemological traditions - feminism, participatory research, disability studies - foreground co-production through user engagement, to bring about change.

- Evidence-based policy is a key area where an awareness of how emotional relations shape society is important especially in times of economic austerity, when citizens are being asked in a multitude of ways to change their behaviour.

UK New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) programme

- Series of research projects funded that looked at:
- What are the forces driving ageing?
- What are the influences shaping them (behavioural, biological, clinical, cultural, historical, social and technological) and how can their consequences be managed to achieve the maximum benefits for older people?
- Insistence upon the use of, 'participatory research methods to engage older people in the development of products, services or research... and the effective communication of users' views an priorities to those developing ICTs'
- Research users include older people, first research council programme with an Older People's Reference Group
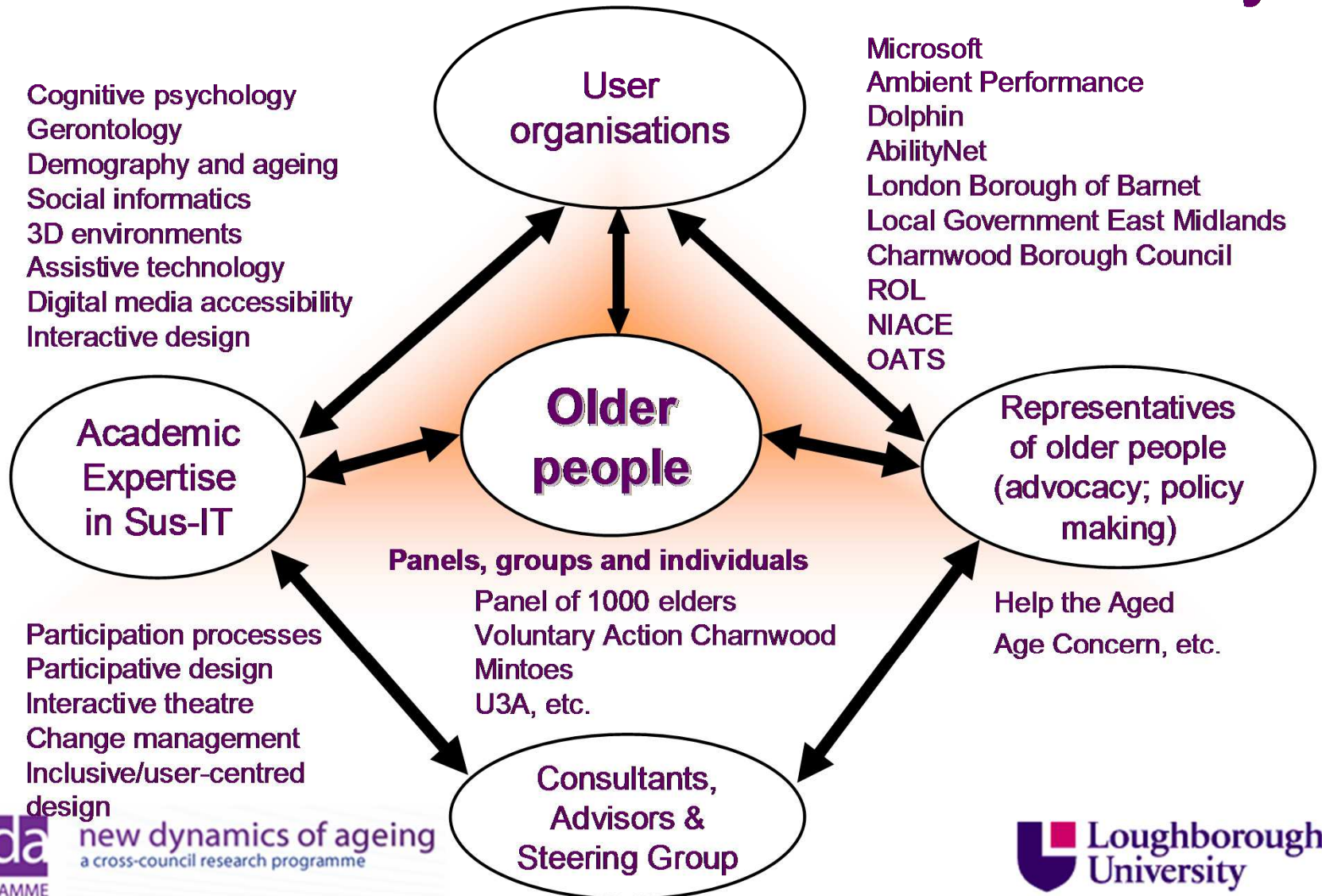
Sus-IT project

- Multi-disciplinary team based in UK and Canada: funded by The New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (NDA) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
- Examined ways of helping older people engage and stay engaged with digital technologies as they age.
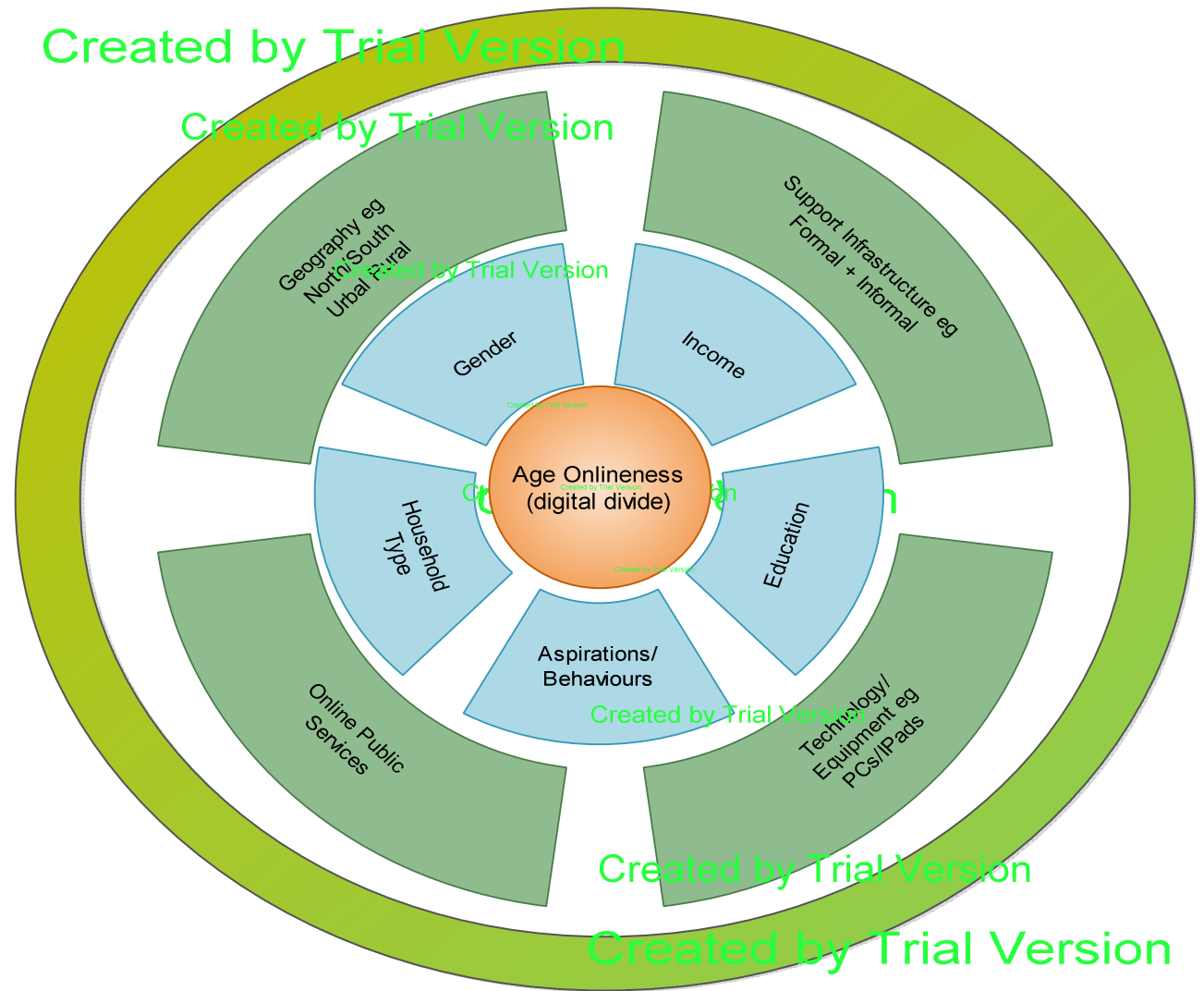- Co-production of knowledge.

The Sus-IT research community

User organisations

Older people

Academic Expertise in Sus-IT

Representatives of older people (advocacy; policy making)

Consultants, Advisors & Steering Group

Cognitive psychology
Gerontology
Demography and ageing
Social informatics
3D environments
Assistive technology
Digital media accessibility
Interactive design

Microsoft
Ambient Performance
Dolphin
AbilityNet
London Borough of Barnet
Local Government East Midlands
Charnwood Borough Council
ROL
NIACE
OATS

Panels, groups and individuals

Panel of 1000 elders
Voluntary Action Charnwood
Mintoes
U3A, etc.

Help the Aged

Age Concern, etc.

Participation processes
Participative design
Interactive theatre
Change management
Inclusive/user-centred design

new dynamics of ageing
a cross-council research programme

nda
PROGRAMME

Loughborough University

One impact: older people & Egovernment CARDI, Ireland

northumbria
UNIVERSITY

Age Onlineness
(digital divide)

Gender

Income

Household Type

Education

Aspirations/
Behaviours

Geography eg
North/South
Urban Rural

Support Infrastructure eg
Formal + Informal

Online Public
Services

Technology/
Equipment eg
PCs/IPads

What works

- 'Pathways' to Impact, Impact Toolkit
- Established relationships and networks with users
- Involvement of users at all stages of the research
- Well-planned user engagement and knowledge exchange strategies, using targeted and accessible formats
- Understanding of policy/ practice contexts and timescales
- Portfolios of research that build reputations with users
- Good management and infrastructural support
- The involvement of intermediaries and knowledge brokers as translators, amplifiers, network providers

Impact through international research collaboration

- Relationships with user communities are vital.
- Understanding of impact can vary across countries.
- Processes enabling impact can vary.
- Policy processes can vary.
- Effective stakeholder communication can vary.
- Understanding of timeframes may vary.
- Increased cost of knowledge exchange and impact activities (see ESRC website)

And finally

- Impact is multi-dimensional, scientific excellence is essential, as well as bringing about and evidencing wider impact on economy and society – where relevant

- To demonstrate impact one needs a clear audit trail, and clear evidence of the change that has followed

- SSH hold the potential to help understand and transform the complex challenges confronting economies and societies across Europe and beyond.

- These complex challenges are interdisciplinary and international in their reach, our pressing challenges do not necessarily recognise disciplinary and geographical boundaries.

References

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- Hardill, I. and Baines, S (2009) Personal reflections on Knowledge Transfer and changing UK research priorities *21st Century Society* 4.1: 83-96

- Hardill I and Mills S (2013) Enlivening evidence-based policy through embodiment and emotions, *Contemporary Social Science* 8,3,321-32

- Nutley, S., Walter, I. and Davis, H. (2007) Using Evidence. How Research can Inform Public Services. Bristol, The Policy Press

- ESRC: Tips for impact through international research collaboration (http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/impact-toolkit/tools/international/index.aspx