

# DEVELOPING FRAMEWORKS FOR ASSESSING IMPACT IN DIFFERENT ACADEMIC CULTURES

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## PUZZLE

How come the impact evaluation systems in UK, Norway (and Poland) are **so similar** and yet the effects are **so different?**

## ARGUMENT

Implementing a similar system of impact evaluation can produce very different results depending on the broader **context**

## FOCUS OF THE TALK

- Which factors influence the **reception** of impact evaluation policy?
- Which factors influence the **impact narratives** that are produced?
- Crucial aspects:
  - details of the policy
  - the place of the ‘impact agenda’ in the entire science system
  - broader cultural aspects (national culture, institutional culture)

# IMPACT EVALUATION: UK, NORWAY, POLAND

## Systems compared:

- **UK:** Research Excellence Framework (REF) – since 2014
- **Norway:** Humeval 2015-2017
- **Poland:** Ewaluacji Jakości Działalności Naukowej (Evaluation of Quality of Scientific Activity) – 2017-2020 (to be run for first time in 2021, methodology described in law of 22.02.2019)

# SCIENCE SYSTEMS & EVALUATION STRATEGIES

UK

- Investment in R&D: 1.7% GDP, €40.4 bn (2016) to increase to 2.4% in 2027, longer term 3%
- Number of researchers per m inhabitants: 4,254
- Considered 'central' science system
- Single, expert-review driven evaluation system (REF) which is basis for funding distribution

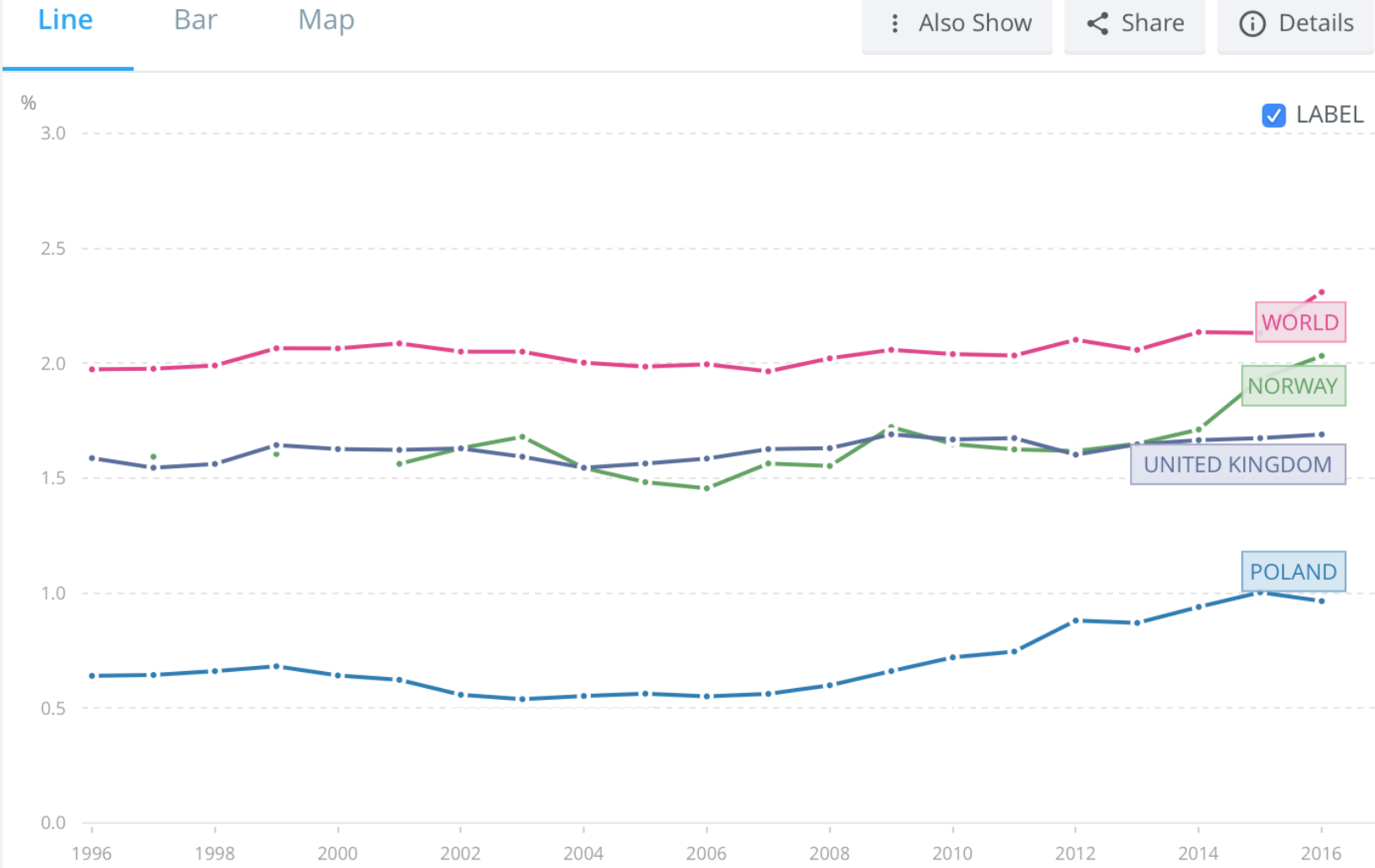
NO

- Investment in R&D : 2.04% GDP , €6.8 bn (20% increase from 2011)
- Number of researchers per m inhabitants: 5,687
- Complex system of evaluation, using different methodologies, mainly formative

PL

- Investment in R&D : 0.97% GDP, € 4.1 bn (2016)
- Number of researchers per m inhabitants: 2,053
- Mixed "parametric" approach to science evaluation

# R&D SPENDING AS % OF GDP



## Developed

- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium/Luxembourg
- Canada
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Hong Kong
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Poland**
- Portugal
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- UK
- USA

Source: data.worldbank.org, FTSE

# IMPACT EVALUATION IN UK, NO, PL

Differences and similarities



# EVALUATION OF IMPACT – SIMILARITIES

REF	Humeval	Pol Eval
Similarities		
Definition of impact adopted*		
Criteria: ‘reach and significance’**		
Basis for assessment: impact case studies (CSs)		
CSs submitted by Unit of Assessment		
Unit of Assessment – discipline within university		
Assessment conducted by disciplinary panels (expert review)		
Impact on academic teaching excluded		?

## DIFFERENCES: EVALUATION SYSTEM

	<b>REF</b>	<b>Humeval</b>	<b>Pol Eval</b>
Process of change of science evaluation	Shift from one system to another	Developmental	Shift
Time from announcement of impact policy to evaluation	8 months (08.2015–04.2016)	Over 2 years (2011–2013)	2 years (2019-202)
Disciplines assessed separately or together (in a single evaluation)?	Together (All disciplines (STEM and SSH) assessed at the same time every ~6 years)	Separately (disciplines assessed separately every ~10 years)	Together (every ~10 years)
Assessment tied to core funding or formative	Tied to funding	Formative	Tied to funding
Impact to account for what % of final score	Ref 2014: 20% REF 2021: 25%	–	20%

# DIFFERENCES: CASE STUDIES

	REF	Humeval	Pol Eval
Case study template	Yes	Yes (same as UK)	?
Number of CSs required	~1 per 10 researchers	At least 1 CS per evaluation panel, up to 1 CS per 10 researchers (in practice 1/14 academics submitted)	1 per 50-60 researchers (+2-3 per department in some cases)***
Evidence for impact	Broad range: including qualitative and quantitative data (sales / attendance data, user testimonials, surveys etc.)	Broad range	“reports, scientific publications, citations in other documents and publications”
Evidence for impact	Broad range: including qualitative and quantitative data (sales / attendance data, user testimonials, surveys etc.)	Broad range	“reports, scientific publications, citations in other documents and publications”
Impact template for UoA?	Yes	No, but elements included in other evaluation elements	No
Timeframe	REF 2014: impact which occurred between 2008 and 2013 (5 years) and was based on research carried out between 1993 and 2013 (20 years).	Both the research and the impact should have been produced in the last 10–15 years, counting from 2015 (2000-2015)	Impact to occur in the census period (2017-2020) based on research carried out from 1997

# EVALUATION OF IMPACT – DIFFERENCES

	<b>REF</b>	<b>Humeval</b>	<b>Pol Eval</b>
Practitioners (non-academics) included in panels	yes	no	?
Type of feedback	Only aggregated score (on scale from 1–4) for unit of assessment (no scores given to individual CSs)	Descriptive feedback given on quality of impact case studies (sometimes per submission, sometimes for each CS)	Descriptive feedback on individual CSs, 800 characters
Quality of research required	Impact based on high-quality research (at least 2-star, on the REFs 1-4 star scale)	Impact must be based on published research results, but no explicit requirement as to quality	No explicit requirement as to quality*

# RECEPTION OF IMPACT POLICY

# REACTIONS TO INTRODUCTION OF EVALUATION

- What are the factors that determine the reception of an impact evaluation system?
- What do you think were the reactions in the three discussed countries?
- What was / will be the reaction in your context?

# HOW CAN NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO IMPACT EVALUATION BE MITIGATED?

Think of possible strategies of policymakers & evaluators

## CRUCIAL FACTORS

- Definition and criteria adopted
- Time from introduction to implementation of policy
- Evaluation formative vs tied to funding
- Context of the introduction (changes in other areas of evaluation)



## APPROACHES OF POLICYMAKER TO RESISTANCE TO CHANGE – UK & NO

UK

- open debate including strong critique – engagement of academic community)
- flexibility (amending initial definition & guidelines)
- incentives from universities and research councils
- professional support

NO

- progressive implementation of impact evaluation
- assessment not linked to funding

PL

- broad debate with scientific community (but not about impact)

# IMPACT NARRATIVES

# DATA

## UK

- 78 impact **case studies** (CSs) (105 K words), panel 28 (Modern Languages & Linguistics)
- 25 interviews: 20 academics, 2 policy-makers, 3 uni administrators

## Norway

- 31 impact **cases** (ICs) (35 K words ), panel 28 (Modern Languages & Linguistics)
- 10 interviews: 6 academics, 4 policy-makers, 1 uni administrator

## IMPACT CASE STUDY – A NEW ACADEMIC **GENRE**

- **Genre** : a class of communicative events, which share the same communicative purpose, recognized by the expert members of a discourse community
- Genre analysis: making what is implicit explicit
- But... impact case study is a new academic genre
- Everyone is a newcomer!

## “MAD PANIC”: WRITING AN IMPACT CASE STUDY

Mad panic! Total, total panic. Because none of us had thought about impact. We didn't know what it was. We didn't know how to measure it, we didn't know how to write about it. We didn't know... anything about impact. But we had to write this impact statement.

Author of CS for REF 2014

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I did a lot of thinking about the impact case study, because it was not at all clear. (...) [The administrators] said 'hey, you interpret this question entirely differently [to other authors]!' We need to find out how you are supposed to answer this and we will get back to you and you will have to revise it'. And I was getting mad by this point!

Author of CS for Humeval

HOW DO YOU THINK NORWEGIAN CS  
DIFFERED FROM THE BRITISH ONES?

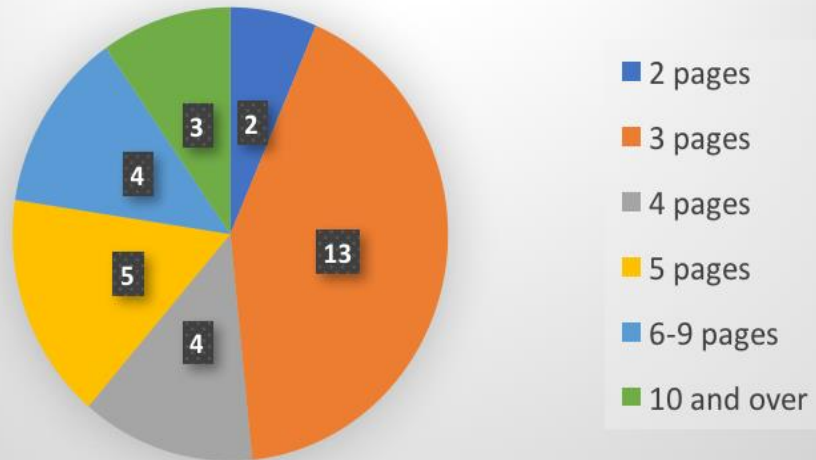
Which factors could have influenced the  
shaping of a new genre in Norway and in the  
UK?

## BRITISH AND NORWEGIAN CS – EMERGING GENRES?

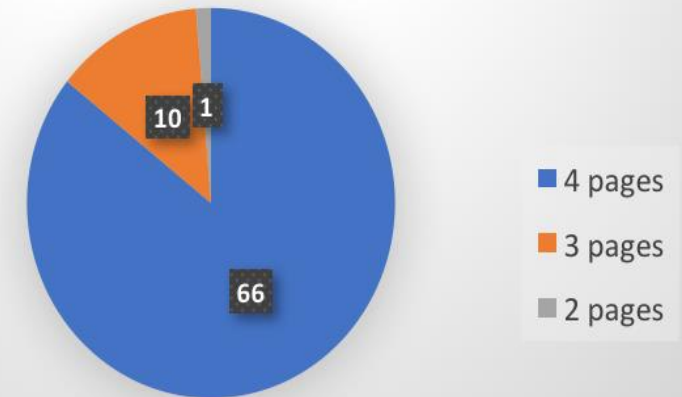
- British CSs as a genre are coherent and uniform
- Norwegian CSs are strikingly different one to another
- This is visible in structure and length, narrative patterns, use of the template, grammatical forms, use of meta content (images, charts, links) and overall focus of the texts.

# BRITISH AND NORWEGIAN CS – EMERGING GENRES?

## Length of Norwegian ICs



## Length of British CSs





# BRITISH AND NORWEGIAN CS – DISTANT COUSINS?

British	Norwegian
Readable, divided into clear sections, information 'flagged up'	Sometimes chaotic, rare use of subheadings, information sometimes 'hidden'
System of referencing between sections	No references between sections, or traditional referencing used
Attachments mentioned in references section	Attachments pasted into the body
All boxes used to maximum	Boxes often left empty
Corroborative information eagerly provided in dedicated space	Information often missing or left to find by panelists
Focus on persuasion (self-promotion)	Focus on information (modesty)

# BRITISH CS – EXAMPLE

## Impact on Policy Making

Collini's arguments have been publicly acknowledged and discussed by David Willetts, presently Minister for Higher Education, most notably in a major speech defending government policy (1 March 2011) [9] and in an article in the *THE* (1 March 2012) [10]. This is turned to further responses to Collini's work from the public and fostered additional debate. As a direct result of his research findings, Collini was invited on two occasions (18 January 2011 and 22 February 2012) to address the All-Party Parliamentary Universities Group (composed of MPs, Peers, and Vice-Chancellors) at discussion-meetings at Westminster. When a major public debate was held on 'The Future of Higher Education in Scotland', Collini was again invited to be a speaker; both his talk, 'The English Problem and "the Scottish Solution"', and his *LRB* piece 'From Robbins to McKinsey' were cited in the subsequent report of the Review of Higher Education Governance in Scotland (2012) [11].

## Impact on Public Services (Universities)

Collini's research has been used in the management and planning in a number of HEIs internationally. For example, his work has been drawn upon by the University of Toronto in a university-wide planning exercise and by the Board of Governors of the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John. The Vice President and Provost, University of Toronto, attests that Collini's work 'has informed my own strategic planning', including the strategic review of her University that she led in 2011-12, *Towards 2030: the View from 2012*, in which she spoke to 'the view so nicely articulated by Professor Collini — how higher education enriches both individuals and societies and the importance of this rich education in a rapidly-changing economic and political landscape'. She describes *What are Universities for?* and his *LRB* articles as 'exemplars of today's best thinking about the role of universities' and their author as 'a passionate defender of plain and meaningful expression', concluding: 'For this alone we all owe him an enormous debt.' [12] The Chair of the Board of Governors at the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John circulated a copy of [5] to each member of the Board of Governors (25 members). [13]

- Divided into sections (areas/types of impact)
- Patterns of writing about impact. Here "further impact" (impact leads to more impact)
- Use of superlatives: 'major', 'best'
- Use of numbers (evidence)
- Use of citations, testimonials
- VIPs
- All backed by references

## NORWEGIAN CSS- CITATIONS

we assume they [impact-related activities] must have had some ‘impact’; the impact of humanistic research here is indirect but not insignificant (CS 2)

[the research] had some impact on the way in which the general public understand Norway’s history of [area] (CS 28),

there are, furthermore, signs that it will change [in area], but it is early days for a proper judgment on this (CS 27)

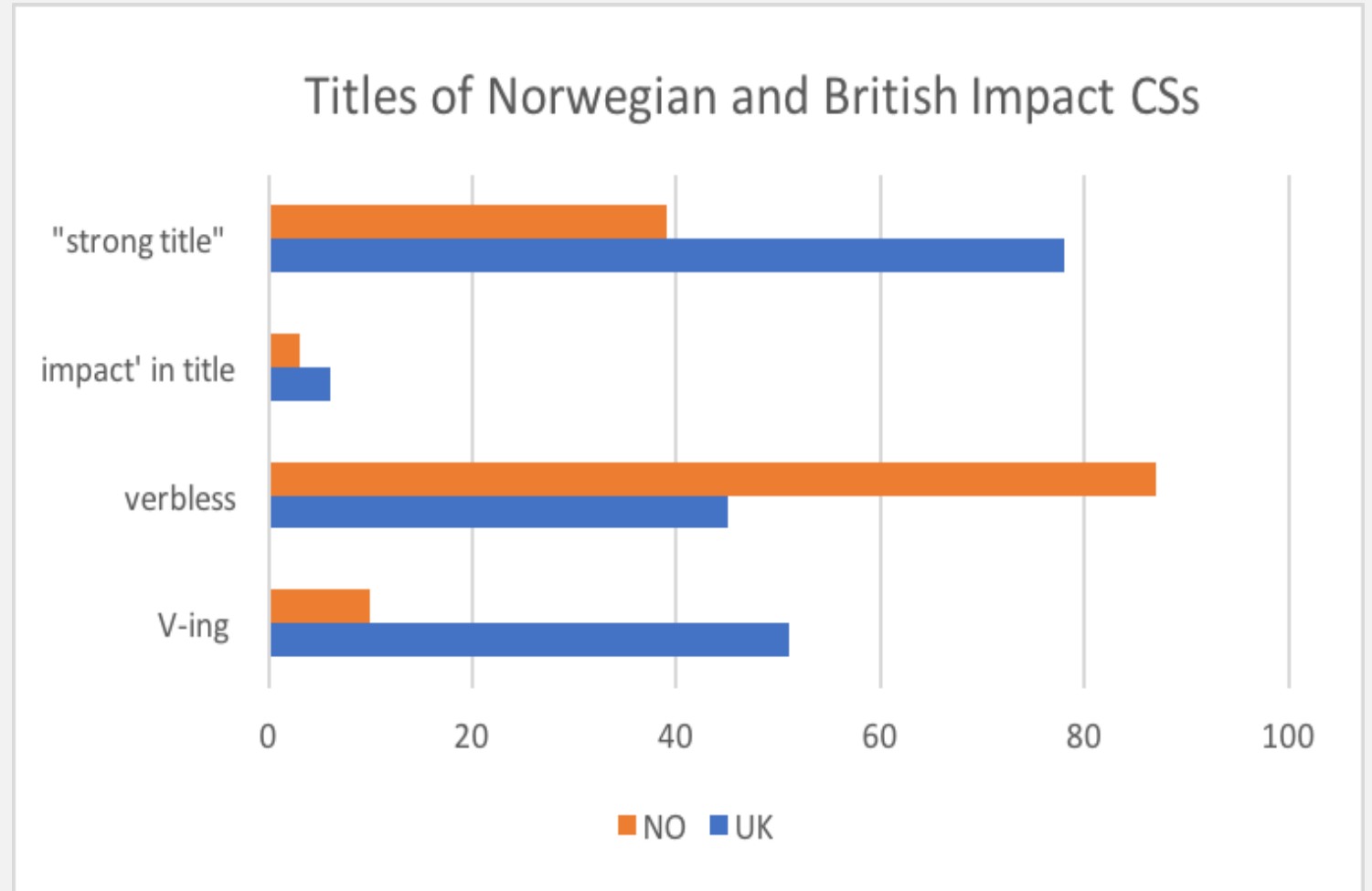
# GOAL OF DOCUMENT – PERSUASION OR INFORMATION?

“Strong title” : contains ‘impact’ or contains ‘change verb’ (developing, enhancing, increasing), conations ‘policy’

Examples:

**Strong title:** Championing linguistic rights and educational opportunities for sign language users around the world

**Weak title:** Public dissemination of the British National Corpus



# GOAL OF DOCUMENT – PERSUASION OR INFORMATION?

	ICs Norway	CSs UK	Total
<input type="checkbox"/> quality	156	975	1,131
<input type="checkbox"/> size	59	335	394
<input type="checkbox"/> change words	213	1,640	1,853
$\Sigma$ SUM	428	2,950	3,378
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> # N (Documents)	31 (28%)	78 (71%)	109 (100%)

## Frequency of 'positive' words in the two sets

- Quality: excellent, ground-breaking, leading...
- Size: huge, major, massive...
- Change: grow, increase...

WHY DO YOU THINK NORWEGIAN  
CS ARE MORE 'MODEST'?

# CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AFFECT DISCOURSE

## Differences in Marketing



**THE BEST PRODUCT**  
**AMAZING!**  
**SPECIAL** → **MAKES YOU RICH**  
**AND FABULOUS**  
*Sale!* **ONLY!**  
**FREE SAVE!**  
**BE BETTER THAN**  
**YOUR FRIENDS!** *Call*



*This is a nice product*



*You might enjoy this*



## LAW OF JANTE

“You are not to think you're anyone special or that you're better than us.”



WHAT ARE THE AVANTAGES AND  
DISADVANTAGES OF THE  
'NORWEGIAN' VS 'BRITISH' STYLE OF  
CS?

Think of the task of evaluating the CS – in  
which case will the evaluators have an 'easier  
job'?

# WHAT CULTURAL ASPECTS WILL AFFECT THE RECEPTION OF IMPACT POLICY IN YOUR CONTEXT?

Think about the perceived role of science / scientists in society?

Think about communication patterns (is academia inward or outward looking?)

Think about trust between policy-maker and scientific community?

## THE ROLE OF GENRE

Genres **reflect** underlying values of a community...

but what if they can also **change** or challenge them?

## IMPACT EVALUATION AS SHAPING A NEW 'PROFESSIONAL VISION'

Initially we did not understand the concept of impact, but in the 4-5 months of working on the CSs we found out that we are actually good at it. The moment you understand it, you realize you know this, you are this.

(Interview 10, NO, research manager)

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I suddenly realized what the application of my research was. Oh my God! Why didn't I see it before? This is so obvious! But I think that this only came about through my *YEARS* of having to say to academics "no, your theoretical research is not useless, I'm seeing this little strand here...". It was only when I took **THAT EYE** onto my own research, that I saw it.

(Interview 7 UK, impact officer)

## TAKE-AWAY POINTS

- Implementing a similar system of impact evaluation can produce very different results depending on the **broader context**
- The **genre of impact case study** doesn't appear in a vacuum – it reflects (sometimes unexpected) aspects of the local culture
- Writing in the new genre of impact case study contributes to shaping **a new 'professional vision'**

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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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