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Book review

Valuing Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research - beyond Impact, by Keri Facer and Kate Pahl. 2017. Bristol, UK: Policy Press. £64 (hardback); £25.99 (paperback). ISBN 978-14473-3162-9

True to the title, the book itself is a collaborative production effort. On 250 pages, over 60 contributors, involving academics, officials and communities, share their intimate knowledge on collaborative projects. The specific focus of the text is on conceptualising new meanings of research products and effects of research, hence going "beyond impact" as the subtitle promises. The book is written in an accessible language which makes it easy to read both for academics and non-academics. The book builds on the notion that impact is pervasive concept and provides a challenge to today's academic institutions. Besides the introduction, the book consists of three major sections.

Funders request impact to be created, documented and on occasion monetised. But qualitative methods can be at odds with impact creation, so that the authors argue for a new look at impact. Going beyond impact, the book instead makes use of the term legacy to describe lasting effects of projects. Much consideration is hence given to the composition of legacy: what comprises a result when much is intangible in collaborative projects? Results are often not immediate and may happen at later dates. The authors promote a rethink and give practical advice, resulting in a new language that more aptly conceptualises legacy.

Nine case studies make up the bulk of the text, completing the first section. The nine chapters cover an extensive project range from applying project management skills, working with a deprived community, to applying a value lens, collaborating on heritage and history, using a performative angle, the role of artists, engaging policy communities and applying cultural mapping. In the second section the editors Facer and Pahl construct a lexicon of legacy aspects. Whilst the third section provides a critical outlook of the collaborative discipline, in the light of the current impact industry universities operate within.

I enjoyed reading the book. It offers a sound framework to rethink impact-legacy. The authors take the reader with them on various empirical and theoretical journeys to uncover, discover and re-discover project legacies. The qualitative sciences, operating in the social realm and investigating social questions, rely on socially involved researchers. This is Gidden's double hermeneutic and, as ever, it poses a challenge to being 'objective' and measurable. No countable results in length, breadth or height are achieved in qualitative studies, particularly when compared to quantitative studies. Making the case for the qualitative sciences, the authors go deep and wide to describe legacy to the reader. Legacy is knowledge in process, it is valuing learning and mutual understanding as an outcome, producing the value of higher connectedness amongst individual and groups. To me it felt that perhaps funding bodies could rethink impact and legacy too. The book is an exaltation to collaborative community research - and that is welcome. It is the social sciences, and specifically the qualitative branches, that can offer theories and answer question of why and how – when the natural sciences are restricted to ask quantifiable (by numbers) questions and questions of what.

Particularly useful to me as a reader was the conceptualisation of two timeframes. On the one hand, there is project time. This is the traditional timeframe in which a project gets started off and progresses along its milestones and outputs. On the other hand, there is process time. It is this timeframe that is concerned with the movement of knowledge. Essentially, it is knowledge that is the currency of community studies, the book's editors posit convincingly. Growing and cultivating knowledge systems is an unpredictable endeavour. The knowledge dimension depends on a multitude of circumstances, chance encounters and contributors' dispositions. Project time and process time, if done right, can work in tandem. The important take-away lesson from the book is that a reflecting phase is needed in projects. The project team, including funders, may allow time and space to cast back their thoughts and learn from the project's shortcuts and deviations.

In the challenging reality of impact creation, the book provides an alternative viewpoint on the meaning of impact in qualitative community research. It shines a spotlight to biases inherent in the impact culture and overcomes the apparent dilemma by empowering researchers to rethink project management and research results. Knowledge is a fluid process. Projects create social change and changes contributors. I appreciated this emancipating 'feminist' aspect of the book. Yet, I suggest it gets even craftier: collaborative community research in itself has emancipating and enduring goals at its heart. As such knowledge management is a skill that community research may already possess. The question is if we, the researchers, can use those very skills and infuse funding bids to an emancipating effect. The ultimate test is to convince funding bodies of the emancipating quality inscribed in our funding applications. At the very least, we now have a book to reference in funding applications.

Whilst the book does not have a particular focus on transport, much of it will be relevant to transport geographers. At a time when governments and councils are announcing climate crises, the critical study of transport and mobilities should be of real interest. Questions of political inaction and community action are hotly relevant to this debate. Researchers seeking funding to answers these social questions of 'why?' and 'how?' are in good hands. Anyone interested in taking a communal approach to transport studies - students, academics, science communicators, policy makers – will undoubtedly value the text for its framework to impact and legacy.

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