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## Social Sciences Impact Conference 20-21 March 2023 *'Hope into Action'*

### Call for Contributions

Please follow this link to make a submission: <https://oxford.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/social-sciences-impact-conference-2023-hope-into-action>

Closing date for submissions is 12 December 2022, 5pm, UK time.

### Background and context

The Social Sciences Impact Conference, first held in 2018, brought researchers and professional staff together from four regional universities to share and celebrate *'Impact: Making a Difference'*. Attendees explored the many guises of social sciences impact and its future. Now four years on, expanding on the successes of the first event, we are pleased to announce the second iteration of the conference: *'Hope into Action'*, this time over two days (20 and 21 March 2023) and hybrid in format. We aim to bring together diverse voices and experiences to the conference: interweaving ideas and research from both academic and non-academic settings.

**Much has changed** since our last conference. Society is facing **unprecedented challenges** including the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, economic uncertainty and political turbulence, a cost-of-living crisis and struggling public services, the energy crisis and the war in Ukraine, and the ever-present pressures of the climate crisis felt around the globe.

More than ever **social scientists are playing a crucial role** in understanding the world around us and offering unique insights across a diverse range of topics – exploring new techniques and ways of thinking and doing; challenging ideas, theories, policies, and practices; reimagining futures and responding to real world challenges for the benefit of society. All of this, offering hope for the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought into stark relief that **interdisciplinary collaboration, engagement, and innovation across sectors are absolutely crucial** to turning those hopes into actions that make a difference: research and researchers can make a positive contribution in responding to emergent challenges and delivering **impact at scale**. It also highlighted the important role of our research in **informing public opinions and policy debate**, and the personal and professional highs and lows of being an engaged 'public academic' or 'expert advisor', in an era of so much online misinformation.

The pandemic also brought **remote working and digital technology** to the fore, online engagement replacing in-person events across our personal and professional lives. In some ways the travel and lockdown restrictions limited the amount of engagement activity taking place, but in other ways it opened it up allowing easier international collaboration, and making events **accessible to marginalised groups** and those with caring responsibilities – **democratising engagement** in ways previously unimagined. These new ways of working highlighted where previous engagement practices were perhaps not always inclusive and prevented full and diverse participation. We want this conference to celebrate and encourage **more inclusive and responsible engagement practices** and to set new and enduring standards as we move away from COVID restrictions.



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## About the conference

The *'Hope into Action'* conference seeks to delve deep into some of these issues and to hear from a range of voices – both academic and from other sectors. What have we learned so far? What does it take to deliver impact in different and challenging contexts? How do we scale and sustain impacts? How do we deliver impact responsibly and inclusively?

This **two-day conference** will examine these questions and more. It will celebrate engaged and impactful research in the social sciences, and provide inspiration and support for all those hoping to create change for the better through their work.

The conference is aimed at **researchers** of all career stages (including DPhil/PhD students, research staff and academics) and the **professional colleagues** who support them. You might be a social scientist or someone keen to collaborate and learn a bit more about social sciences. *'Hope into Action'* is also aimed at **stakeholders from outside academia** who are already partnered with or keen to engage with social sciences researchers, **intermediaries** and **funders**. The programme will comprise a mixture of invited external speakers and session leaders, contributors from the host institutions and other UK universities and a range of non-academic stakeholders.

We are delighted to be able to hold the conference **in person at St Anne's College, Oxford**, with **some sessions also available online** via livestream or recording. The sessions will be free to attend for speakers and colleagues from the partner universities, with limited paid tickets for wider participants.

The conference is brought to you through the generous support of the **University of Oxford's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account**, with event support from the four partner universities (University of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University, the Open University and the University of Reading).

## The programme

The programme will comprise a mixture of invited external speakers and session leaders, and contributors from the four partner universities and wider UK universities. We are also keen to represent the voices of non-academic partner organisations, so participants can hear directly what those organisations need from researchers and learn from successful (and less successful) collaboration experiences.

The conference will share experiences and learning, techniques and published research that will help **academic participants** with designing and planning for impact; the practicalities of implementing their plan and engaging beyond academia; building and developing partnerships and engagement; monitoring, measuring, and evaluating impact, and communicating about processes of knowledge exchange and impact.

We would be delighted to have sessions and contributions led by **non-academic partner organisations**. Our academic colleagues will benefit from their professional experiences and perspectives, and hearing what is needed on the ground, and how best to collaborate. Non-academic participants in return will hear examples of collaborations that have been successful, learn engagement techniques suitable for enhancing their collaborations with academics, have an opportunity to network and learn more about how social sciences can support them.

**Professional staff** will be able to share their technical expertise and knowledge from working in specialist areas of engagement and impact. They stand to further develop their knowledge at this

conference, making new connections and having an opportunity to step back and think strategically about how they build capacity for engagement and impact in their own professional contexts.

## Formats

There are opportunities for contributors to engage with the conference in a variety of formats. You can select your preferred formats in the online expression of interest form.

- **Plenary sessions** – short oral presentations sharing inspirational stories or posing a call to action (10-15 mins + Q&A)
- **Workshops** – interactive sessions engaging participants on a topic (1hr) limited formal presentations, more focus on audience participation.
- **Panel discussions** – series of short presentations (5-8 mins) followed by Q&A, discussion. You can suggest a whole panel (4-5 participants) or put yourself forward to be part of a panel.
- **Skills sessions** – offer your technical skills in the form of a training session on a particular skill/technique required for engagement and impact
- **Case studies** – in-depth examples sharing multiple perspectives e.g. from researchers, external partners and end users/beneficiaries (1hr)
- **Exhibits** - poster, video or other physical or virtual project outputs e.g. teaching packs, policy briefs, reports, toolkits, artefacts, photos.
- **Other suggestions welcome!**

## Topics of interest include (but are not limited to):

- **Addressing complex societal challenges** – What are the unique opportunities and constraints for social scientists? How does this differ to other subject groupings? What is the value of social sciences? How can we ensure this is well understood and communicated? What are the benefits and challenges of a multi-pronged, multi-perspective approach to societal challenges in achieving impact? What are the issues in terms of working across disciplines, combining and compromising when it comes to different approaches and different technical languages?
- **Balancing competing demands** – Balancing day-to-day professional realities and responsibilities with aspiration to develop meaningful research impact practices and experiences. The intersection of personal and professional lives: Where do the concepts of activism, advocacy and campaigning intersect with your work? What reflections emerge on the ethical imperative of care towards both researchers, as well as towards participants/ collaborators – how do we engage responsibly and what are the future pathways of support for this? What support or approaches have you made use of?
- **Improving our impact practices** – what have you found helpful when planning for and integrating impact into your research or projects? What pathways did you choose to focus on and how did you create your impact plan? Did the reality match the plan? What went wrong? What would you do differently and what did you learn from your mistakes? In a world evermore focused on metrics, indicators and ‘measurable’ evidence, how can you really prove the extent of your impact? Which evaluation techniques work well and how have you tracked your impact? Do we apply the same rigour to our engagement work as our research? What does ‘best practice’ look like and are we engaging in responsible, ethical and inclusive ways?

- **Successful and sustainable partnerships and collaborations** – building relationships with a variety of different stakeholder groups – public and private sectors, civil society as well as broader community and publics. How are researchers responding to the needs, strengths and ideas of stakeholders? What do they want from research? What formats and techniques have you used to engage particular audiences? What unique outputs have you created, and how have you ensured they were adopted by users? How have you deepened and sustained stakeholder relationships and created value at different stages?
- **Impact at scale: innovation, business engagement and commercialisation** – creative examples of initial impact being developed further, e.g. roll out on a larger scale, reaching beneficiaries in additional regions/countries/sectors. Examples of ‘letting go’ of your impact and allowing it to grow without your continued input (e.g. in the hands of external partners). How have you worked with business and industry to facilitate, target and grow your impact? What have you learnt? Your examples of social sciences innovation through creating spin-outs or social enterprises, licensing, consultancy and other ventures.
- **Using your research to engage with public policy** – how have you engaged with the policymaking community locally, nationally or internationally? How have you ensured your research reaches the right people at the right time to meet the policy need? Are the current mechanisms for policy engagement effective? What are the challenges and opportunities for researchers working in the policy-sphere? How do we ensure that policymakers have access to and make use of the best available evidence? How can research be more policy-relevant?
- **Public and community engagement with social sciences research** – informing and inspiring, consulting and collaborating with different ‘publics’ to have an impact. Do you have examples of when public engagement has been really worthwhile? What did you and the public(s) involved contribute or learn from the interactions and dialogue? How did engagement evolve and what role did it play in developing impact? What did engagement contribute to the research process? What is the legacy of the engagement and has this led on to future collaboration opportunities?
- **Celebrating 10 Years of ESRC Impact Acceleration Accounts** – reflections on what the IAAs have helped us achieve, within and across institutions with examples of projects supported by the IAAs. What have the challenges been and where do we go next? Have we seen a change in engagement and impact culture and capacity in the last decade and what work do we still have to do?

## Submission process

We would love to hear from you if you are a member of the research, academic or professional staff, or a DPhil/PhD candidate, at any of the four partner universities, the ESRC IAA cohort of universities or from other UK universities and:

- you have **experience of engaging with non-academic audiences** to make a difference
- you have already **successfully created impact**
- you are **on the journey to impact** but have not quite arrived yet
- you have **published on the topic of impact and engagement**, theory or practice
- you have **provided professional support for impact and engagement** activities



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We would also love to hear from non-academic contributors who:

- Have **experience of engaging with the academic community** to deliver impact
- Provide **intermediary, enabler or broker role**: facilitating and convening partnerships; managing knowledge exchange processes; funding KE, innovation and impact; or supporting development of an evidence base and knowledge products for adoption by others.
- Support KE and impact from research through **government and higher education policy**.

We welcome individual or group/team applications and encourage involvement of your non-academic partners or beneficiaries where feasible.

We also welcome suggestions for skills-based workshops that you would find helpful to attend but don't feel able to deliver yourself.

Submissions should be made online by following the link on the front page of this document.

The deadline for submissions is **12 December 2022, 5pm UK time** and notification of acceptance will be sent in January 2023. Accepted contributors must confirm their participation by 31 January 2023 and register to attend the conference by 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023 (registration is free for contributors).

### Information required for submission

- Name(s), job title and email addresses of contributor(s)
- Organisation, Department details
- Descriptor of role type
- Contributor bios and webpages (word limit 100 per person)
- Title (no more than 100 characters)
- Abstract (200-word description of planned contribution excluding title, author, affiliations)
- Topics of interest
- Formats (choose all session formats you would be willing to contribute – please see information above)
- Date preference (20 or 21 March 2023)
- Mode of delivery preference (in-person, online, or both)

### Special note on poster submissions

- We are not accepting research posters apart from studies that are directly relevant to the topic of this conference e.g. research about knowledge exchange processes or HE policy.
- Posters should focus on knowledge exchange, engagement, innovation and impact projects where making a difference beyond academia is the main purpose.
- Maximum poster size is A0.
- Keep text to a minimum and ensure text is in a large font (24 or above).
- Use photos, charts, diagrams, infographics or other visualisations.
- For other exhibits e.g. videos, online toolkits please bring PAC tested electronic equipment or make arrangements to borrow equipment with the conference secretariat.
- The conference organisers are not responsible for the cost of printing posters or other items.

## Terms and conditions

- The text of the abstract along with the names and affiliations, poster, PowerPoint presentations and/or additional documents may be published on the conference website and in promotional materials/programme.
- A submission as a particular presentation type may be changed to a different type following review in order to be accepted and included in the programme.
- Sessions may be live streamed and/or recorded. A recording of the presentation and a copy of the slides may be published online after the conference.
- Accepted contributors must confirm acceptance of their offer for a place by 31 January 2023 or they may be removed from the programme.
- The contributor must be available to present at the conference on 20 or 21 March 2023. We will consider presenters' preferences but the decision on which date a session will run will be made by the programming committee.
- The conference programming committee will consider requests for online or hybrid delivery of presentations and will do their best to accommodate such requests based on the technical set-up available, the overall balance of the programme and accessibility requirements of the individual contributors and audience members. We cannot guarantee that every such request can be accommodated.

## Getting in touch

### Conference secretariat:

If you have any queries about the information in this document or the conference please contact the conference secretariat:

**Event lead:** Aileen Marshall-Brown, Head of Engagement, Social Sciences Division, University of Oxford  
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**Event manager:** Rebecca Launchbury, ESRC IAA Manager, Social Sciences Division, University of Oxford  
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### Regional partner event contacts:

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#### Conference programming committee:

**Professor Heather Viles (Chair)**, Associate Head of Division (Research), Social Sciences Division, University of Oxford; Professor of Biogeomorphology and Heritage Conservation, School of Geography and the Environment; and Director of the Oxford Resilient Buildings and Landscapes Lab

**Professor Joanne Begiato**, Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Professor of History in School of History, Philosophy and Culture, Oxford Brookes University

**Professor Adrian Bell**, Research Dean for Prosperity and Resilience, University of Reading, Chair in the History of Finance, ICMA Centre, Henley Business School

**Jaqueline Broadhead**, Director, Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford

**Professor Rafael Ramirez**, Director of the Oxford Scenarios Programme and Professor of Practice, Said Business School

**Professor Catherine Schenk**, Professor of Economic & Social History, St Hilda's College and Faculty of History, University of Oxford

**Professor Jane Seale**, Professor in Education, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies, the Open University

**Dr Sam Sneddon**, Head of Research Impact and Engagement, Social Sciences Division, University of Oxford