IMPROVING ARTS AND HUMANITIES ENGAGEMENT IN IRELAND'S CIVIC AND COMMUNITY SPHERE

Experiences, challenges, and opportunities for researchers based in HEIs.

An open access portfolio documenting the key findings of the CEPRAH (Community Engagement Praxis for the Arts and Humanities) project led by the Trinity Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute, Trinity College Dublin and AONTAS.

The CEPRAH project team was Eve Patten (PI), Elspeth Payne, Caoimhe Whelan, Eve Cobain, Joan Cronin, Caitriona Curtis, Leah Dowdall, and Giovanna Lima.

The portfolio was authored by Elspeth Payne, Caoimhe Whelan, and Eve Patten and launched on 15 June 2022.

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Elspeth Payne, Caoimhe Whelan and Eve Patten. (2022). Improving Arts and Humanities Engagement in Ireland's Civic and Community Sphere. Experiences, challenges, and opportunities for researchers based in HEIs. Trinity College Dublin.

Available at: https://doi.org/10.25546/99243

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Engaged research is an increasingly important part of the Irish research ecosystem.

- The Arts and Humanities (AH) appear to be under-represented in engaged research initiatives.

- Resources, workload, and university systems and structures often discourage AH researchers from collaborating with Civic Society Organisations (CSOs).

- Funding calls are not conducive to equal partnerships, with CSO partners often unable to hold budget.

- Gaps in understanding, including around partner remit, work culture, aims, terminology, and contact points further hinder collaboration.

- Research infrastructure, administrative supports, and training provisions need to be improved to facilitate AH-CSO collaboration.

- Engaged research projects and partnerships need to be more visible.

- Universities should consider introducing networking supports, mentorship schemes, and brokerage services.

- AH-CSO collaboration can be transformative with both sectors bringing unique skills, knowledge, and perspectives to the partnerships and projects.

INTRODUCTION

Engaged research is increasingly recognised as integral to addressing national and global societal challenges. Collaboration is also an expanding element of university and government policies and a component of both national and European funding schemes.

The Arts and Humanities (AH) currently appear to be under-represented in engaged research initiatives. Researchers may be missing out on (a) the benefits of bringing their work into active dialogue with societies and communities outside the university and (b) access to important funding streams.

The CEPRAH portfolio focuses specifically on the experiences, challenges, and opportunities for the AH. It is a resource for individual AH researchers as well as the support staff and management working in HEIs in the Republic of Ireland. The portfolio aims to encourage and enhance future AH-CSO collaboration.

The portfolio is primarily based on (i) an in-depth mapping of the existing engaged research landscape, (ii) one-on-one interviews and case studies, and (iii) a networking event. The authors are indebted to all who took the time to talk to us and engage with the CEPRAH project.

i. CEPRAH

CEPRAH (Community Engagement Praxis for Research in the Arts and Humanities) was a project led by the Trinity Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute (TLRH), Trinity College Dublin, and AONTAS, Ireland's National Adult Learning Organisation.[1] The project was funded by an Irish Research Council New Foundations Grant (Strand 1a).

CEPRAH recognises (a) the unique perspectives offered by Arts and Humanities (AH) research and (b) the importance of collaboration with civic and community organisations (CSOs) to address the challenges facing societies at a local, national, and global level. The project draws on the concept of praxis – the translation of theory into real-world practice – to define its agenda. CEPRAH addresses a critical gap between the desire of AH researchers to partner with CSOs and the existing knowledge of methods and pathways to achieve this.

CEPRAH seeks to bridge the gap between the two sectors and produce practical guidance to support the development of new partnerships and ventures. The CEPRAH open-access portfolio documents the project findings and experiences and is designed with the AH researcher in mind.

The **Trinity Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute** is dedicated to advancing Trinity College Dublin's rich tradition of research excellence in the Arts and Humanities, on an individual, collaborative and interdisciplinary basis. TLRH seeks to foster new platforms for engaging public audiences and drive innovative Arts and Humanities led approaches to societal challenges.[7]

AONTAS advocates and lobbies for the development of a quality service for adult learners, and promotes the value and benefits of adult learning and builds organisational capacity. Membership is open to all organisations, groups and individuals interested in the promotion or advancement of adult education.

1. CEPRAH is part of the TLRH's ongoing work in Arts and Humanities-led democracy research and the Schuler Democracy Forum programme for 2021-22. CEPRAH is framed by the TLRH Arts and Humanities Policy Initiative (see Patten, E., Whelan, C., and Curtis, C. (2021) Policy and the Arts & Humanities in Ireland: A Position Paper by the Trinity Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute. Available at: https://doi.org/10.25546/97767). CEPRAH aligns with the AONTAS Strategic Plan, which stresses the advancement of social inclusion and equality.

I. METHODOLOGY

CEPRAH builds upon the existing engaged research scholarship, particularly the work of Campus Engage, to focus specifically on the experiences, challenges, and opportunities for AH researchers working in the Republic of Ireland.[2] CEPRAH provides tailored case studies and resources to address under-representation and improve AH-CSO collaboration.

CEPRAH undertook a detailed mapping of the existing landscape, including analysis of the strategic plans, engaged research structures, and ongoing/completed AH engaged research projects in eight universities in Ireland[3]; examination of the strategic plans and relevant funding calls of national and EU funding bodies,[4] and a review of relevant national policies.[5]

CEPRAH organised a Virtual Café to bring together AH researchers and CSO practitioners to share knowledge and identify practical methods and pathways to improve collaboration.[6]

CEPRAH also invited AH researchers and practitioners working in CSOs to complete an online survey. Respondents were not required to have prior experience of engagement. The survey, despite being heavily promoted by TLRH and AONTAS and related organisations, had a disappointingly low uptake and completion rate.[7]

2. International examples of collaboration were beyond the scope of the CEPRAH project, but detailed examination of the global research landscape is an important next step.
3. Dublin City University (DCU); Ollscoil na Gaillimhe – University of Galway ; Maynooth University (MU); Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin (TCD); University of Limerick (UL); University College Dublin (UCD); University College Cork UCC); Technological University Dublin (TUD). Munster Technological University (MUT, established Jan. 2021) was not included in this research.
4. The research focused on the Irish Research Council and European Commission (Horizon Europe).
5. Including the Irish government, Higher Education Authority (HEA), and Irish Universities Association (IUA).
6. On principles of the World Café format, see http://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/design-principles/; the format was adapted for an online event due to Covid-19.
7. A total of 47 responses were received, of which 30 identified as AH researchers, 11 as CSO practitioners, and 6 as 'other'. Removing 14 incomplete, 3 duplicate, and 1 troll responses produced a total data set of 29 (8 CSO, 15 AH, and 6 other).

A relevant representative from each Irish university's engaged research community was invited to an interview with a member/s of the CEPRAH team to overcome challenges of insufficient survey data and the limitations of online and published material (e.g. outdated websites).[8]

In addition, AH researchers with experience of collaboration identified during the mapping exercise were interviewed. Their responses inform the project findings and were used to produce in-depth case studies capturing information on specific projects, initiatives, and experiences.[9]

The CEPRAH portfolio is a result of qualitative analysis of all interview data and the Virtual Café as well as the findings of the mapping exercise. With the exception of the case studies and quotations, all responses have been anonymised.[10]

8. Key individuals in DCU, NUIG, MU, TCD, UL, UCD, UCC, MU, and TUD were identified from the university website and/or the Campus Engage national contacts. After exploratory email exchanges, although included in the mapping phase, interviews were not conducted with TUD as their programme focuses on teaching. 2 representatives attended the UCC meeting. Contact was made with 2 additional TCD contacts. A total of 11 invitations were sent, and 8 interviews were conducted online (via Zoom) typically lasing 30-60 minutes. Interviews were transcribed and analysed.
9. 10 researchers were identified in the mapping phase of the project and, as far as possible, efforts were made to reflect the range of AH disciplines (German, Classics, Film, Music, History, English, French, Philosophy, Religion) across universities in Ireland as well as the diversity of the CSO sector while ensuring a gender balance (6 female, 5 male). Nine interviews were conducted online (via Zoom) typically lasting 30-90 minutes. Interviews were transcribed and analysed.
10. Participants provided written permission for the quotations and case studies included in this portfolio.

i. WHAT ARE THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES?

The Arts and Humanities (AH) include religion, theology, ethics, drama, film studies, music, literature, creative writing, archaeology, philosophy, classics, history, history of art, gender studies, languages, cultural studies, and philosophy. [11]

All of these disciplines put identities, history, culture, and society at the centre of their research, recognising the importance of experiences and individual sensibilities. In doing so, they provide the often-missing human values and historical insights while fostering critical thinking skills, empathy, and imagination.

11. Although the Trinity Long Room Hub member schools also include International Peace Studies, Linguistics, Education, and Law, these disciplines are traditionally based in social science faculties.

"As an historian, what I can get people to do is to be more reflexive."

– CEPRAH interview with Kevin O'Sullivan, NUIG

"You can emancipate yourself – really help yourself out – by questioning things. Latin brings up questions young people are thinking about, such as gender and sexuality, and offers a way to talk about them."

– CEPRAH interview with Charlie Kerrigan, TCD

"People have an emotional response… You have to target all the different parts of human experience to prompt change."

– CEPRAH interview with Helen Phelan, UL

ii. WHAT ARE CIVIC SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS?

According to the European Union, 'Civil society refers to all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to, nor managed by, the State. A civil society organisation (CSO) is an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process, and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and citizens.

Examples of such organisations include:

- social partners (trades unions & employers' groups);
- non-governmental organisations (e.g. for environmental & consumer protection);
- grassroots organisations (e.g. youth & family groupings).' [12]

While recognising the diversity of activities, The Wheel (Ireland's national association of community and voluntary organisations, charities, and social enterprises) identifies the following features as common to CSOs:

- Are a legitimate expression of people exercising their fundamental human rights
- Express interests and values
- Are independent and autonomous
- Involve and facilitate voluntary as well as collective action

The Wheel notes that most 'have one of a small number of legally recognised forms, including registered charities' and many are 'also characterised by their attempts to realise a public benefit from their activities (or to promote the 'common good').'[13]

iii. WHAT IS ENGAGED RESEARCH?

According to Campus Engage:

"Engaged research describes a wide range of research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaboration with societal partners. Engaged research aims to improve, understand, or investigate an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges and sustainable development goals. It is advanced with societal partners rather than for them. Societal partners include service users, product users, policymakers, civil and civic society organisations, industry partners, members of the public, and other relevant stakeholders."[14]

Collaborative enquiry with societal partners may not be suitable for every project. The aim is to have a diverse, healthy research ecosystem in which many forms of enquiry are adequately funded and resourced.

Engaged research is not the same as research impact, but it has 'high potential for both academic, economic, and societal impact'. [15] As outlined by Campus Engage, 'early engagement of stakeholders … enables a better understanding of the relevance of the research and, in return, the potential for knowledge translation, positive outcomes and longer-term impact.'[16]

12. EUR-Lex (2021) Glossary of summaries. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil_society_organisation.html
13. O'Connor, N. and Ketola, M. (2018) Enabling Citizens – Powering Civil Society. Available at: https://www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2018-08/Powering%20Civil%20Society_0.pdf.

14. Campus Engage (2022). A framework for engaged research: society and higher education addressing grand societal challenges together. Available at: https://www.campusengage.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Updated-Final-PBS10553-IUA-Engaged-Research-Framework-2022_V7.pdf. As recognised by Campus Engage, engaged research is one strand of civic and community engagement. Although beyond the scope of the CEPRAH project, the AH also have important insights and skills to contribute to engaged teaching and learning, student volunteering, and public engagement and involvement.
15. The Economic and Social Research Council (2022) Defining Impact. Available at: https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/impact-toolkit-for-economic-and-social-sciences/defining-impact/.
16. Campus Engage (2022). Engaged Research Planning for Impact Society and Higher Education Addressing Grand Societal Challenges Together. Available at: https://www.campusengage.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Updated-Final-PBS10581-IUA-Engaged-Research-Planning-for-Impact-Framework-2022-Update_V5.pdf.

II. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

i. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIS)

While AH-CSO collaboration is still largely individual-driven, a more systematic and better-resourced university-wide prioritisation of engagement is slowly emerging in Ireland.

Engaged research features in the current strategic plans of all the universities in Ireland, although relative importance varies. The resources and structures similarly differ between institutions and, in this fragmented landscape, the active support of high-profile 'champions' (university officers and presidents) is critical.

ii. IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL (IRC)

Engagement features in the values and mission outlined in the 2020-24 strategic plan of the Irish Research Council (IRC), the main funder of AH research in Ireland.[17] The IRC actively promotes collaboration between researchers and civil society organisations through the New Foundations (Strand 1a) funding call, Enterprise Partnership scheme, and Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme. It also supports the work

of Campus Engage, including the 'Engaged Research for Societal Impact' project. [18]

iii. IRISH GOVERNMENT

Engagement is placed alongside research and teaching as the core role of higher education in the Irish government's National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. It states, 'open engagement with their community and wider society and this should infuse every aspect of their [HEI] mission' and calls for improvement in coordination and structures to 'welcome and encourage the involvement of the wider community in a range of activities, including programme design and revision.[19]

In 2021, the government sought to engage the Irish public directly through the 'Creating our Futures' consultation series, which invited individuals to submit ideas that will 'inspire research projects that will make a positive impact on our lives.'[20]

iv. HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY (HEA)

In line with government policy, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Strategy emphasises the importance of HEI external engagement, particularly in responses to social and economic needs. [21] The HEA calls for relationships with civic society to be 'further strengthened with the aid of Campus Engage, and the cultivation of research collaborations between researchers and the civil society sector.' [22]

v.   IRISH UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION (IUA)

Campus Engage, based at the Irish Universities Association (IUA), was established in 2007 with funding from the HEA.[23] Campus Engage supports HEIs to embed and promote civic and community engagement across staff and student teaching, learning and research'.[24] Campus Engage provides practical 'how to' guides and training materials for researchers and civic society organisations, as well as case

17. Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Strategy 2025 similarly includes supporting 'engagement with and participation of a broader range of civil society and community groups across SFI's schemes'. SFI primarily supports STEM research.
18. IRC (2020) Funding Opportunities for Civil Society Organisations to Partner with Researchers. Available at: https://research.ie/2020/09/02/funding-opportunities-for-civil-society-organisations-to-partner-with-researchers/.
19. Department of Education and Skills (2011) National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. Dublin: Government Publications Office. Available at: https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf.
See also Irish Universities Association (2022) Engagement. Available at: https://www.iua.ie/ourwork/engagement/.

20. SFI (2022) A National Conversation on Research in Ireland. Available at: https://creatingourfuture.ie/.
21. For the HEA System Performance Framework which includes civic and community engagement, see Campus Engage (2021) Policy on Civic Engagement in HEIs. Available at: https://www.campusengage.ie/about-us/policy-on-civic-engagement-in-heis/.
22. HEA (2018) 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. Available at: https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/HEA-2018-2022-Strategic-Plan-FINAL.pdf.
23. Averil, A. (2021) The Contribution of Mass Higher Education in Ireland to the Public Good: Perceptions from within and outside Irish Universities. Available at: http://www.nui.ie/publications/docs/2021/NUI_Discussion_Paper_No2.pdf
24. Irish Universities Association (2022) Campus Engage. Available at: https://www.iua.ie/ourwork/engagement/campus-engage/

studies, research reports and policy briefs.[25] It was responsible for developing the Campus Engage Charter on Civic and Community Engagement, signed by twenty presidents of HEIs, and the basis for the research, learning, and impact frameworks subsequently developed.[26]

vi. EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Commission has made engagement with civil society a programme principle and operational objective of the Horizon Europe funding scheme with a view to 'opening up of R&I processes to society to develop better, more innovative and more relevant outcomes, and to increase societal trust in the processes and outcomes of R&I.'[27] The programme guide outlines possible co-design, co-creation, and co-assessment activities for inclusion

in proposals.[28] Partnership accordingly features in a number of the work programmes, either as a suggestion[29] or, in some cases, a core requirement of the call.[30]

The European Commission also supports social innovation, which it defines as 'new ideas that meet social needs, create social relationships and form new collaborations', through a number of its funding schemes.[31]

25. Campus Engage (2021) Tools and Publications. Available at: https://www.campusengage.ie/what-we-do/publications/?cat-type=framework.

26. Campus Engage (2021) Policy on Civic Engagement in HEIs. Available at: https://www.campusengage.ie/about-us/policy-on-civic-engagement-in-heis/.

27. European Commission (2022) Horizon Europe (HORIZON) Programme Guide. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf. Engagement was also a feature of the Horizon 2020 scheme, see European Commission (2022) What was Horizon Europe? Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/public-engagement-responsible-research-and-innovation.

28. European Commission (2022) Horizon Europe (HORIZON) Programme Guide. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf.

29. See, for example, HORIZON-CL2-2022-DEMOCRACY-01-08 and HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01-05 in European Commission (2021) Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022. 5. Culture, creativity and inclusive society. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-5-culture-creativity-and-inclusive-society_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf.

30. See, for example, HORIZON-CL3-2021-FCT-01-11 in European Commission (2021) Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022. 6. Civil Security for Society. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-6-civil-security-for-society_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf.

31. https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/strategy/innovation/social_en

vii. THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF AH RESEARCHERS

The Irish government National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 explicitly recognises the fundamental importance of the Arts and Humanities, alongside Social Sciences, to address 'areas of fundamental importance to society – areas that impact on enterprise, job creation and public policy'. It goes on to explain:

"In the Irish context, these disciplines study values and practices that are central to our national identity, our sense of self, and to how we progress as a society. They are important drivers of economic and social innovation, promote ways in which the economy is managed and developed, and suggest how individuals can engage and participate in civil society." [32]

Collaboration with the civic sector is happening across the whole campus, including in the AH disciplines. The engagement representatives and AH researchers who participated in the CEPRAH interviews, Virtual Café, and case studies confirm that incredibly diverse and important work is already happening in this intersection.

Despite this recognised value and the success of existing projects, fewer funded collaborations appear to involve AH researchers.[33] This is perhaps compounded by wider problems capturing engagement from any discipline in the existing university reporting systems, an issue many of the engagement officers we spoke to during this research are attempting to address. Nevertheless, issues of visibility remain, and no authoritative breakdown of AH engagement is currently available.

32. Department of Education and Skills (2011) National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. Dublin: Government Publications Office. Available at: https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf. This is in line with SHAPE (Social Sciences Humanities & the Arts for People and the Economy) initative in the UK see SHAPE (2021) What is SHAPE? Available at: https://thisisshape.org.uk/.
33. Assessment based on information available on the IRC project award database, available at https://research.ie/awardees/.

III.   COLLABORATIONS

i. WHY COLLABORATE?

Collaboration can be transformative, with both sectors bringing unique skills, knowledge, and perspectives to the partnership. Collaboration is about mutual learning and reciprocity.

Collaboration encourages researchers to think about their work in new ways, for example, by exploring the disparities between theory and real-life situations or utilising creative methodologies and outputs. It brings AH research into active dialogue with societies and communities outside the university, including traditionally marginalised and excluded demographics.

"Collaboration enriches academia. It fights complacency and challenges assumptions by continually putting ideas and theories into question."

– CEPRAH interview with Colm Kearns, DCU

Collaboration allows CSOs to shape knowledge production, complete research they would not otherwise have the capacity to undertake, and provides tools to enhance reflexive practice.

"Collaboration can enrich a civil society organisation as it challenges questions of epistemology from practice and academic perspectives, validating both as equal partners in collaborative knowledge creation."

– Niamh O'Reilly, AONTAS

Successful engagement can inform current and future research, lead to new opportunities for collaboration, and shape undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. By offering proof of concept, collaboration can help to secure further funding. In addition, engagement can provide an accessible and tangible way for AH researchers to demonstrate to policymakers and funders the, at times frustratingly intangible, value of the AH.

ii. HOW ARE PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED?

Many of the AH researchers interviewed either had first-hand experience of working for a CSO or had previously worked in the UK university sector. The latter group noted the importance of the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) on shaping their thinking.[34]

The collaborations analysed were often the result of an existing contact within an organisation or a referral from an existing contact. Researchers frequently draw on established connections as it takes time to build up trust, mutual understanding, and effective working relationships.

Researchers may also identify partners based on the reputation and visibility of the CSO. Funding calls can be an important impetus for the development of new relationships. Many cited alignments of CSO mission with research and/or values as key deciding factors. Funding calls can be an important impetus for the development of new relationships. Contact can be initiated by the CSO or AH partner.

34. REF assesses the impact of research outside of academia. REF defines impact 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'. See UK Research and Innovation (2022) How Research England supports research excellence. Available at: https://www.ukri.org/about-us/research-england/research-excellence/ref-impact/.

iii. STARTING CONVERSATIONS: THE CEPRAH VIRTUAL CAFÉ

How do you start the conversation? This was a question with which the CEPRAH project grappled, especially as the Covid-19 pandemic prevented the planned in-person networking event.

On Wednesday, 2nd June 2021, the Trinity Long Room Hub and AONTAS co-hosted a Virtual Café. This format allows participants to share knowledge, ideas, and expertise. A tangible focus relevant to all participants – the concept of 'democratic culture' – was selected to make the most of the limited time available.

The café engaged more than 40 adult learners, academic researchers, and civic and community organisations, including AONTAS' Community Education Network members, and fostered cross-sector dialogue. The event was free and open to all, and ISL/English interpreting was available on request.

The Director of the Trinity Long Room Hub, Eve Patten, and CEO of AONTAS, Niamh O'Reilly, introduced CEPRAH and the perspectives and ambitions of the project partners. This was followed by three short talks from invited AH and CSO speakers with experience in cross-sector collaboration. The talks included an 'ice breaker' element – using the zoom chat function to engage all participants – and provided concrete examples of real projects to show what is possible through AH and CSO partnership.

Participants were asked to reflect on the following questions (i) What does democratic culture mean to you? and (ii) What would a programme designed to strengthen democratic culture in Ireland look like?

The café then moved into breakout room sessions. Each room had a maximum of six participants drawn from both CSO and AH sectors, as well as a facilitator and notetaker from the partner organisations. These smaller groups ensured all participants had space to talk and be heard. Breakout room discussions were not recorded, and all notes were anonymised to allow participants to speak freely. A live illustrator produced visual representations of the conversations.

Read more about the findings of the CEPRAH Virtual Café.

Above: A graphic recording of the Virtual Café conversations created by artist Hazel Hurley. It provides an overview of the opening presentations and captures some of the points raised in the breakout room discussions.

"It is absolutely vital that … people who are working for a common goal come together and support each other."
– CEPRAH Virtual Café contribution from Niamh O'Reilly, AONTAS CEO

"We need to provide the knowledge, systems, and supports needed to enhance engagement, create lasting connections and encourage future collaborations."
– CEPRAH Virtual Café contribution from Eve Patten, Director of the Trinity Long Room Hub

"You have to get close for prejudice to melt."
– CEPRAH Virtual Café contribution from Ray Hegarty, CE Supervisor, SAOL Project

IV. BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

The following challenges were identified in the interviews with university engagement officers and arts and humanities researchers:

- Initial **contact points** in the university and/or CSO may not be clear.

- **Gaps in understanding** around the remit and work culture of the partner, including what the AH are and the role of the CSO.

- Researchers and CSOs may have different **aims, ambitions, and priorities** for the project.

- The use of **jargon and acronyms** can hinder communication between partners and with project stakeholders.

- There is a **lack of training and advice** available for academics and CSOs to support the development of projects and relationships.

- **Workload pressures** can be a challenge for already overstretched academics and CSOs practitioners.

- **Outputs** are not always recognised as research outputs and may not be credited in existing metrics and citations systems.

- **Funding calls** do not always allow CSO partners to hold budget or provide the necessary resources to involve CSOs in the research-design stage.

- Impact can be realised beyond the **funded project timeline.**

In addition, it was noted that university structures can hinder, rather than facilitate, the formation of successful academic-civic society partnerships as:

- **Financial systems** do not support this type of project. For example, paying freelancers and reimbursing community participants can be problematic.

- **Research Offices** do not always understand the AH or provide the necessary supports and structures, e.g. ethical training.

- **Precarious contracts** place strain and pressure on individual researchers to deliver outputs to count in academic metrics.

- Insufficient **teaching buyout** further exacerbates workload challenges.

Engagement is also affected by the **under-resourcing of AH subjects** and the need for **additional funding schemes** to support researchers at all career stages.[35]

'How do we bring in the perspectives of the Arts and Humanities disciplines to respond to the challenges that face societies at a local, national, and global level?'

– CEPRAH Virtual Café contribution from Eve Patten, TLRH

35. While some projects have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the restrictions to face-to-face communication, others noted the benefits of online meetings and events, including the removal of geographical barriers for participation and reduction in running costs.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT

Those interviewed by CEPRAH noted that **Campus Engage** has already given engaged research a more formal structure and provides vital supports and resources including how to guides, case studies, training, and policy briefs.[36]

For effective AH-CSO collaboration, the following were identified as necessary changes at the university level:

- **Engagement must be valued and supported**, including at the highest levels. It should not be viewed as an add-on, but part of a department/university mission.

- **Research infrastructure**, including research offices, need to understand and support (a) the AH and (b) all types of engagement.

- Good **administrative supports** are required for pre- and post-award.

- Further **training** needs to be provided.

- Engaged research needs to be **celebrated**, e.g. academic credit, awards, events etc. and **rewarded**, e.g. promotion criteria.

- Universities and CSOs need to **showcase engaged research projects and partnerships.**

- Discourse around **equality, diversion, and inclusion (EDI)** should extend to research methods.

In addition, the introduction of formal and/or informal **networking supports and mentorship schemes** would encourage and enhance:

- Exchange of ideas and learnings.

- Pooling of resources.

- Peer support and troubleshooting.

36. CEPRAH findings are in line with Campus Engage (2019) Policy Briefing for Funding Agencies. Available at: https://www.campusengage.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Campus-Engage-Engaged-Research-Policy-Briefing-for-HEIs-Published.pdf; Campus Engage (2019) Policy Briefing for HEIs. Available at: https://www.campusengage.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Campus-Engage-Engaged-Research-Policy-Briefing-for-HEIs-Published.pdf; and Campus Engage (2020) Policy Briefing for Senior Civil Servants. Available at: https://www.campusengage.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Campus-Engage-Policy-Brief-Senior-Civil-Servants-and-Policy-Makers-in-Government.pdf/.

By operating across disciplines and universities, the schemes and supports could help to democratise knowledge sharing while building capacity and fostering connections with more diverse groups.

Universities could also provide **brokerage services** to facilitate engagement and partner matchmaking. This would:

- Help partners ascertain what both sides need, set expectations, and create fair and reciprocal relationships.
- Help partners learn about each other (e.g. approaches and timelines) and better understand the opportunities and challenges of collaboration.
- Ensure lines of communication remain open.

The service could utilise existing university-wide connections. It could also invest time in creating relationships and showcasing successful partnerships and projects.

VI. CASE STUDIES

The case studies were produced based one-on-one interviews with AH academics with experience of engagement in Ireland's civic or community sphere. The case studies are designed to highlight the available methodologies and pathways to engagement, showcase the types of projects made possible through collaboration, and demonstrate the value of engagement.

WHAT CAN POETRY DO FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS?

'Speaking the Predicament: Words and Stories for the Anthropocene' (2021) brings AH research into active dialogue with frontline environmental activists to explore the cultural, social, and ethical implications of climate breakdown.

The project seeks to support communication and resilience within activist communities through reading groups, film screenings, poetry readings, and public talks. Reflective spaces and cultural forms are particularly important in the context of activist burnout. By applying the language skills and discourse analysis of AH disciplines, the project creates a holding space for difficult topics. In particular, it confronts the often-overlooked emotional impacts of climate breakdown.

The project is simultaneously shaping AH research – including two peer-reviewed articles on German poetry and ecological anxiety – and informing teaching in UCC.

The project PI, Caitríona Ní Dhúill, is Professor in German at the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at UCC. This was her first formal and funded engagement with a CSO, although she made connections with relevant movements and was involved in 'teach outs' in her previous post at Durham University.

Caitríona approached Friends of the Earth to collaborate on the project in response to the IRC New Foundations funding call. Friends of the Earth Ireland is a not-for-profit organisation that campaigns for environmental justice and sustainability.

"Why are we encouraging people to read poetry? Cognitive dissonance is affecting our sense of time around ecological emergencies. We need to slow down, but we need to do that very quickly, it's a double bind. But if you can verbalise it, you can hold it and think through it."

– **Caitríona Ní Dhúill, UCC**

"The film screenings, poetry readings, and graphic design analysis allowed participants to engage with interconnecting crises on a deeper level … The Friends of the Earth team were delighted to see how this project resonated with activists. The discussions of visual art and ecopoetry opened up conversations with activists about their own creative practices and how they use this to come to terms with and raise awareness of the climate crisis. This collaboration was a fantastic opportunity to turn creative expression and reflections into action."

– **Evelyn Suttle, Events Support Officer, Friends of the Earth**

HOW CAN HISTORY SHAPE FUTURE HUMANITARIAN PRACTICES AND POLICIES?

'Humanitarian History: Past Practice into Future Policy' (2017) brought together practitioners and academics to reflect on humanitarian action in Somalia since the 1990s.

The core activity was a two-day workshop with participants from Trócaire, Concern, Médecins sans Frontières, Christian Aid, and several other NGOs and a smaller number of AH academics.

Collaboration provided CSO participants with a reflexive setting in which to work through a tangible problem to consider what did and did not work in the field, the contextual factors shaping the practice of humanitarian aid, and possible lessons for contemporary policymaking. It allowed the researcher to better understand dynamics, cultures, and pressures not visible in the archival material or theoretical literature.

A co-authored article summarising the project and proposing a model for reflexive practice was published in the *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs.*[37] An open access journal was selected as CSOs often do not have access to articles behind paywalls.

The project has informed teaching with, for example, a second year undergraduate skills module and CSO talks to the BA History and Globalisation Studies programme at NUI Galway.

The project PI, Kevin O'Sullivan, is Lecturer in History and Associate Director of the Moore Institute at NUIG. He has completed three collaborative projects with NGOs as well as a nine-month secondment with Irish Aid / Higher Education Authority and a IRCHSS Cara postdoctoral mobility fellowship at the University of Birmingham.

The collaboration was initiated by Trócaire, the official overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Trócaire had heard Kevin's contribution to a conference at the International Red Cross in Geneva and wanted to engage researchers beyond social science and engineering disciplines. The project was funded by an IRC New Foundations award.

37. O'Sullivan, K. and Ní Chéilleachair, R. (2019) 'Past Practice into Future Policy', *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs 1*(2), pp. 51-55. Available at: https://doi.org/10.7227/JHA.018

"I firmly believe that the knowledge we produce in AH has something very important to contribute to tackling societal issues like poverty, inequality, and social justice. It is vital that we continue to insist on the public value of our work - less by making it 'relevant' and more by ensuring that the knowledge we produce is accessible to a non-academic audience. This is not to denigrate the very real value of purely academic research, which is the lifeblood of what we do, but rather to suggest that we apply our knowledge where and when it can make a positive contribution to society."

– Kevin O'Sullivan, NUIG

"The value of this collaboration brought the heart of humanitarian work and the very human dimensions of conflict into the conversation. The collaboration was rich and informative. For humanitarians who rarely have time to reflect, stop and look back, the opportunity to explore a case study in such a deep and reflective way was unique and quite extraordinary. It was a welcome opportunity to exchange views and debate issues from so many perspectives. We learned from each other and had time to explore our experiences and assumptions on a complex and challenging issue with an informed historical perspective."

– **Réiseal Ní Chéilleachair, current Head of International Advocacy at Concern Worldwide and former Humanitarian Policy Advisor at Trócaire.**

Essential to the success of 'Humanitarian History' was:

- a strong CSO vision for the project.
- the researcher's previous experience of collaboration.
- realistic objectives and clearly communicated expectations.
- structured conversations, with the workshop centred on one tangible case study.
- and a willingness to trust partners, surrender research goals, and embrace genuine co-production.

Contacts forged at the workshops resulted in a 2021 IRC New Foundations project with Dóchas coordinated by Kevin O'Sullivan and Maria Cullen (NUI Galway). 'What Do We Mean by Global Solidarity? Historical Research into Humanitarian Practice' applies the same workshop model to interrogate the idea of global solidarity with a particular focus on human rights, multilateralism, and the climate emergency.

HOW DO YOU BRING LITERATURE AND CULTURE THEORY TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

'Telling Tall and Tiny Tales' (2012-13) was designed to spark children's interest in reading and books while exploring key strands in the English and visual arts curricula.

Across an exhibition and workshop held in The Ark, a dedicated cultural centre for children in Dublin, children had the chance to engage with the original illustrations, notebooks and drafts of well-known books and design and make their own miniature books. They discovered how stories and images work together and produced their own written and illustrated responses to the exhibition, which are still available on the Ark's website.

The project promoted Irish authors, artists, and illustrators. This included Siobhan Parkinson, P. J. Lynch and Niamh Sharkey, who all subsequently held the position of Laureate na nÓg, and Patrick Ness and Jim Kay whose work *A Monster Calls* won

two major UK literary prizes during the exhibition. Eilís Dillon's papers were also on display, providing a unique opportunity for young people to engage with archival material.

In addition, a new two-person performance of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* was devised (which has continued to tour since) and a professional development course for teachers exploring ideas of literacy was created.

A multi-modal networking event brought together project stakeholders to showcase the literature, film, storytelling, art, exhibitions, workshops, reading programme, and public engagement aspects of the project.

The Ark approached Pádraic Whyte, Associate Professor of English and Director of the Children's Literature MPhil programme at Trinity College Dublin, to create the programme. Pádraic had worked at the Ark after completing his PhD and had experience working in the arts sector and with community groups more generally.

Essential to the success of 'Telling Tall and Tiny Tales' were:

- Both partners aims and goals were clear from the outset.
- Understanding the needs of the CSO.
- Involving as many stakeholders as possible, including artists, illustrators, librarians, archivists, actors, and policymakers (Ireland's Ombudsman for Children and the Minister for Children).
- Strategic engagement with material and events with an established public profile, e.g. anniversaries.

The project raised the profile of the Ark and Trinity's MPhil in Children's Literature, as well as the wider field of children's literature in Ireland. Project materials are still being used and the Director of the Ark engages with each cohort of MPhil students.

'Telling Tall and Tiny Tales' led to other projects including a major Irish Research Council/Government of Ireland research grant to establish the National Collection of Children's Books (NCCB) project and exhibition on myth for the Long Room of Trinity's Old Library[38] , and a 2022 IRC New Foundations Award 'Reading Rooms: Fostering constructive & inclusive dialogue between communities' with the Verbal Arts Centre in Derry, Northern Ireland.

38. For more information see Whyte, P. et al. (2021) *National Collection of Children's Books: Repositioning Children's Literature in Ireland*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.25546/97459/

"It made it feel like my research was relevant to wider society and not locked away in an ivory tower. I got a real kick out of sharing it and of promoting what we were doing in Trinity. And demonstrating the relevance of children's literature and the complexities of children's literature."

– Pádraic Whyte, TCD

HOW CAN SINGING PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION?

Helen Phelan is Professor of Arts Practice at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick. She is the founder of the Singing and Social Inclusion research group and the Irish World Music Café, as well as Chair of IMBAS, a support network for artistic research in Ireland. Her most recent Health Research Institute funded project explores the use of participatory arts-based methods in migrant health research.

A historical musicologist by training, her research initially focused on medieval Latin chant, ritual singing, and social and cultural contexts. The experience of collaborating with CSOs has moved her research into the area of lived experiences of migration and participatory arts-based research.

Helen began volunteering with Doras, a Limerick-based NGO which works to support and promotes the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and all migrants in Ireland when it was founded in 2000. She quickly moved from volunteering as an English language teacher to working with a group of asylum seekers who wanted to start a choir.

Where her work as a community activist led, her research quickly followed. Helen became interested in how the establishment of new ritual communities, such as the choir, could provide performative spaces to negotiate belonging in the face of political, legal and social barriers to inclusion, including limited access to traditional public spaces.

Helen believes her experience as a community activist has helped her to create authentic partnerships, foster the right ethos, and develop sustainable and successful projects. She also developed new arts-based participatory expertise – complementing her existing ethnographic and musicological skills and methodologies – to investigate how creative practices themselves can provide the mechanisms to communicate and disseminate ideas and allow for emotional, cognitive, and sensory responses.

In 2015, she led a collaborative co-development of the Irish World Music Café with Doras, a community-based event promoting social singing for new migrants and Limerick residents in the heart of the city. The café model has since been adapted for both live and online contexts.

In 2019, Helen began to apply these principles to a new interdisciplinary research cluster (PART-IM) exploring the role of arts-based methods as participatory strategies to involve migrants in health research. The project engages researchers and practitioners from medicine, nursing and midwifery, the performing arts, and NGOs. It provides a space for expression, cultural sharing, research, and learning. In 2020, the cluster developed a training partnership with Musicians without Borders. A joint report on research prioritisation for migrant health by Doras and PART-IM was launched in December 2021.[39]

39. Phelan, H. et al. (2021) *Migrant Health Research Prioritisation in Ireland: A Participatory Arts-Based Action Plan*. Available at: https://www.irishworldacademy.ie/3d-flip-book/migrant-health-research-report/.

"If you engage people across the multiple modalities of intelligence, you accelerate the process of creating spaces in which people develop trust and experience social bonding."

– Helen Phelan, UL

"There is a need to develop research based on the practical issues and needs that CSO face on a daily basis with the cohort that we support. The lack of research to inform Irish policy-making processes is usually a constraint on CSO being able to generate change."

– Ahmed Hassan Mohamed, Community Sponsorship Support Worker at Doras

HOW CAN VIRTUAL REALITY AND FILM FOSTER EMPATHY?

Conn Holohan is Director of the Huston School of Film and Digital Media and Course Director of the BA in Film and Digital Media at NUIG.

Conn's award-winning research on film and the place of the home has led to collaborations with organisations such as COPE Galway and the Galway Simon Community. His projects engage marginalised communities through film, including people who have experienced homelessness and women who have experienced domestic violence.

His current research, 'Immersive Empathy: Using Immersive Technologies to Communicate the Experience of Homelessness', undertaken in partnership with the Galway Simon Community, is funded by the Irish Research Council and focuses on empathy and experiences of home.

This project involves academic research into how a virtual reality experience can affect levels of empathy in the general population, and works with clients of Galway Simon to create an immersive experience on the theme of homelessness.

Immersive Empathy actively works with the community, organising the training of Galway Simon clients in oral history techniques to create a repository of personal narratives that will be used within the immersive reality experience. These twin combined foci will facilitate the creation of a number of different types of academic and non-academic outputs which serve the CSO, their community and their academic partners so that all stakeholders can benefit from the project.

"People are not raw material. It is important to develop relationships and realise that not everybody wants the same things or outcomes."

– Conn Holohan, NUIG

"The value of collaboration with Arts and Humanities researchers is that they provide essential expertise in their fields and this allows us to concentrate on the expertise in the services that we provide."

– Tommy Walsh, Community Social Integration Office at Galway Simon

HOW CAN ART, MUSIC, LITERATURE, AND DRAMA HELP UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN SEEKING ASYLUM IN IRELAND?

Rachel Hoare is an Assistant Professor of French at Trinity College, Dublin and a child and adolescent expressive arts psychotherapist and play therapist. She was the first AH recipient of the Trinity Registrar's Civic Engagement Award in 2020.

In 2015, in collaboration with Tusla's Separated Children Seeking Asylum Unit, she set up an expressive arts psychotherapy service for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Ireland.

Her work combines expressive arts therapies which include working with art materials, movement, music and other creative approaches to create a flexible approach to trauma that can be adapted to suit the individual young person's needs. It recognises the importance of cultural contexts and adopts a trauma-informed approach.[40]

40. Rachel was also involved with a TLRH panel discussion 'Syria: the Local and the Global' where she presented on the impact of trauma.

Rachel's work on migrant children and asylum seekers in Ireland informs her teaching, including an elective module on the human experience of forced displacement and a core module in the MA in identities. She also delivers regular training to social workers, social care workers, youth workers, and teachers.

Rachel has been granted approval to establish an interdisciplinary Centre for Forced Migration Studies in Trinity. She is also a member of the University of Sanctuary group and is involved in a student-led initiative to raise awareness and increase the number of the scholarships for students from Direct Provision.

Rachel has been awarded a 2022 IRC New Foundations award to complete a project with Spirasi, the national centre for the rehabilitation of victims of torture in Ireland. The project aims to understand, affirm, and improve refugee experiences of the Spirasi befriending programme. It will involve interviews and focus groups with refugees, the co-production of a visual arts piece, a symposium and a report as well as academic outputs.

"The power of collaboration in this area is key. My collaboration with social workers, social care workers, youth workers and educators as well as other clinicians, charities and NGOs has led to the development of creative initiatives which have combined practical and clinical experience with evidence-based research in order to enrich and improve the experiences of some of the most vulnerable young people in our society."

– Rachel Hoare, TCD

"Befriending started as a pilot project in 2017 and early testimonial evidence pointed to its potentially powerful impact. Further independent research, using Rachel's multi-faceted approach, will provide further evidence, not only of the importance of befriending within the holistic model of care of our clients, but will also offer suggestions to improve and develop our befriending service."

- Deirdre Markey, Befriending Officer with Spirasi

VII. LEARNINGS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

Collaboration requires trust, time, and patience and often goes beyond the scope of project funding and timeline. Partner selection should be informed by project aims and the expertise required as well as individual temperaments and priorities. Project goals should be tangible, and the value of CSO participation should be clearly articulated. While partners should make their motivations for participating clear at the start, successful co-production requires flexibility and compromise. Crucially, all relationships should be mutually beneficial with two-way learning.

Building relationships:

•   Establish named contacts in the university and CSO to take ownership of the project.

•   Be aware of power dynamics and recognise the skill base is shared.

•   Listen to what your partners want and explain your role and expectations clearly.

•   Allow for different organisational cultures and pressures.

Organising meetings:

•   Consider going to the CSO for the first meeting or finding a neutral space.

•   Allow time for ideas to percolate and for plans to change. A few short meetings can be more productive than one long meeting.

•   Have a clear process for the resolution of disagreements.

Designing the project:

•   Involve your partners at every stage of project design.

•   Be flexible and co-develop tangible goals, realistic aims, and clear parameters.

•   Don't overreach – know what you can do and do no harm.

Implementation and outputs:

•   Select methods and models appropriate for all stakeholders.

•   Consider whether you need to provide training or accreditation for participants.

•   Create audience-appropriate outputs and try to capture the impact of the project.

VIII. KEY RESOURCES

Campus Engage tools and publications
https://www.campusengage.ie/what-we-do/publications/

Irish civil society organisations looking for partners for EU-funded projects
https://www.accesseurope.ie/find-an-irish-partner
https://www.wheel.ie/training

SHAPE-ID Toolkit: pathways to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research
https://www.shapeidtoolkit.eu/

Engage2020 Action Catalogue: an online decision support tool to find the method
best suited for specific project needs.
http://actioncatalogue.eu/search

Participating People: Enabling Active Citizenship in Twenty-first Century Ireland
https://www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2019-11/15129_
TheWheel_participating_people_WEB.pdf

National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) resources. The NCCPE
supports UK higher education sector.
https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/resources

The Canadian Centre for Community Based Research: Thinking about Working with
External Researchers?: Checklist for Community Groups & Organizations.
36eba7_d4a281876d6d47da957e7ce5227a964b.pdf (filesusr.com)

IX. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following for giving up their time to discuss the experiences, challenges, and opportunities for AH researchers based in HEIs. The interviews provided the core data on which the portfolio is based.

Angela Veale, UCC
Ann Lyons, NUIG
Bernie Grummell, MU
Caitríona Ní Dhúill UCC
Charlie Kerrigan TCD
Ciaran O'Neill, TCD
Colm Kearns, DCU
Conn Holohan NUIG
Helen Phelan, UL
Kevin O'Sullivan, NUIG
Martin Galvin, UCC
Mary Colclough, TCD
Maura Adshead, UL
Pádraic Whyte, TCD
Rachel Hoare, TCD
Simone Cameron-Coen, TCD
Siobhan Garrigan, TCD
Theresa O'Leary, UCD