

Research report

For what it's worth:
Identifying the next step in
research on the value of the humanities

Fenna Veenstra

RMA Comparative Literary Studies, Humanities, Utrecht University

Supervisor: Dr. Deborah Cole

Project: Community-Based Research for the Humanities Project

Project leader: Dr. Jocelyn Ballantyne

Date: 26 June 2020

Questions concerning the humanities and its contribution to society have been around at least since the historian J.H. Plumb announced a “crisis” of the humanities in 1964. But after the global financial crisis at the start of the 21st century, this became an even more pressing matter as an age of economic austerity led to a drastic reconsideration of public expenditure. In the world of academia, all research now had to be able to show how much their work was worth, how much ‘impact’ it had on society. Science increasingly became a tool for boosting GDP and this meant it had to be tangible how scientifically generated knowledge transferred to businesses, the public, or directly to the economy. A wealth of literature on research evaluation and impact measurement amassed, assessing each department. The arts, humanities and social sciences, however, were largely overlooked because traditional methods of assessing value, which delivered concrete results in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) research, did not seem to apply here. In a (Western) world where the language of tangible economic return was ruling supreme, these departments did not join the conversation. Failing to produce data meant they failed to produce proof of their societal value in the current economic climate. This resulted in budget cuts, and a redirection of funding to departments that did promise value for money. Humanities scholars responded, of course, for the most part producing answers to the self-generated epistemological question: what is value (anyway)? These contributions often share the conviction (implicitly or explicitly stated) that the value of the humanities cannot and should not be measured in numbers. If we step outside of the humanities, however, and look at the question of its value and how it is approached, we find an array of literature concerning itself with finding appropriate methods of research evaluation for this department, and we find a wealth of publications that investigate ideological biases about the value(lessness) of the humanities that underpin higher education policy. The perspectives on the topic are multifaceted and this paper explores the current debate around the value of the humanities as it takes place both within the humanities and outside of it. Drawing on results

from a research project during my internship at the Community-Based Research for the Humanities project at Utrecht University, I propose a new angle to this debate, which incorporates the underrepresented perspective of what might be argued the university's main audience; students and non-academic research partners.

Starting from within the humanities, we find a body of work expressing concern about the growing demand for the production of quantifiable data on the societal impact the humanities has and, with that, proof of the relevancy of this department in contemporary times. In this corner, it is often argued that the impact of the humanities cannot be measured in numbers, because it has a more roundabout way of impacting the world. For instance, Martha Nussbaum would say that humanities education creates engaged citizens who are aware of social injustices, which will influence the ways in which they lead their lives and the decisions they make. A common thread in many of these publications is the conviction that the humanities is in some way exempt from quantification because it is unique, and its values and aims are important in different ways than other disciplines (Bate 2011; Jay 2014; Summer 2014; Brooks & Jewett 2014). The publications share an intention of illuminating that uniqueness in one way or the other. Others take a different approach and analyze the recurring arguments that are being used,¹ to test their validity in contemporary times (Small 2013). And there are those that try to move out of that story of exceptionalism by arguing that all disciplines are unique in their own way but that it does not keep *them* from measuring their impact (Van den Akker 2016).

Indeed there is an entire body of research assessing each and every discipline on how (much) they contribute to society and/or the economy. Being educated within the humanities myself, my assumption was that uneven demands were being placed on this department because the public and the politicians are indifferent to us specifically, or regard us in a light of

¹ These being: the humanities is distinct from other disciplines; the humanities contribute to happiness; democracy needs the humanities; the humanities is valuable for its own sake; the humanities is useful, but not quantifiably so.

redundancy. It turns out that the global economic crisis simply asked for a reinterpretation of value on all levels. The 2010s were a time of austerity in which public spending had to be restricted to recover the economy and EU governments had to be more transparent about funneling taxpayer's money this way or that. Academic research in general was an area where a lot of money went without a clear narrative on what the economic or societal return was (Reale et al. 2018). Thus we enter an age of systematic research assessment. To assess research was not a new thing and methods were available to test impact. However, these traditional methods worked better in so-called STEM (science, tech, economy, mathematics) disciplines and got little result in the social sciences, humanities and the arts (Belfiore 2013). No methods were generally available at that point to test (without failing) these other departments and this meant that a wealth of literature sprung up proving the value and relevance of STEM, while the humanities (and arts and social sciences) were mostly left out. One could argue that it is merely this lagging behind that led to funding being increasingly redirected to STEM departments, while cuts were made elsewhere (Benneworth 2015). The language of the time was one of economic/social return and STEM was able to deliver results according to that language.

However, within this discourse of general research assessment, this discrepancy was identified as an opportunity for further research. This was done to find out why traditional methods of research assessment did not work in the social sciences, humanities and arts and suggestions were made to improve this (Belfiore 2013; Donovan & Gulbrandsen 2018; Benneworth et al. 2016; Hazelkorn 2015). In this discourse it is noted that humanities' resistance to quantification and answering to demands from higher up poses a challenge in developing fitting methods of measuring (Benneworth 2015).

At the same time, research was also done into the domain of higher education policy. Using critical discourse analysis, it is noted here how policy on humanities education is informed by ideological biases, which translate themselves in explicit or implicit statements about the (lack of) value of humanities research and, in turn, inform official policy (Benneworth &

Jongbloed 2010; Olmos-Peñuela et al. 2014; Olmos-Peñuela et al. 2015; Reale et al. 2018).

What this corner of research realized is that humanities' policy makers and stakeholders in certain countries in the European Union hold a set of different assumptions about the value of (arts and) humanities research. They argued that gaining knowledge about processes that contribute to biases opens up the possibility to identify specific areas that might benefit from a clearer narrative on what humanities research actually is.

Paul Benneworth & Ben Jongbloed (2010) use the lens of stakeholder theory and note that the key stakeholders of a university decide what valuable knowledge is. Stakeholders, in this understanding, are those groups that are *affected by* what a university does or that *can affect* its objectives. Higher education policy makers are stakeholders, as well as businesses, the scientific community, government, the general public and, say, students. Obviously, those groups that can affect a university's direction hold the most power. But a faculty that centers around the human experience is perhaps more concerned with those groups that are affected by what it does. While it is understandable that we, as a faculty, have a hard time explaining to politicians in charge of the national budget that what we do matters as much as STEM research, what is less understandable is that we have about as much trouble communicating our relevance to the general public that portray the human experience which we study. A lot of the arguments put forward by humanities scholars are concerned with showing how their work is valuable 'in its own way'. This, however, has little hold in the imagination of the politicians *and* the public of the day. As a department that specializes in communication, we somehow seem to lack the skills to communicate our value to areas beyond our own. Considering some voices from within the humanities say 'yes' to setting up systems of research assessment for the humanities (Van den Akker 2016), it is interesting that very few humanities scholars actually focus their research energy on creating these systems (the researchers that are looking into to humanities assessment come from other disciplines).

The humanities publications noted earlier in this paper often critically analyze or philosophize ‘value’ (what is it, who defines it, how does it change over time, etc) to argue that value is an inherently unstable concept that comes in many different shapes and sizes, making it almost impossible to unanimously decide what is valuable. However, the fact is, research assessment is about making those decisions. And this is done by measuring research ‘impact’. Pain et al. (2016) argue that the concept of research impact as it currently is being used should, in fact, be expanded. Impact is defined as “the social, economic or environmental changes ... that are created or influenced by research” (4). Traditionally, measuring impact follows a linear model, where one single knowledge producer sends knowledge into the world, generating knowledge in a ‘donor-recipient’ fashion. Impact is understood as a “concrete, visible phenomenon that is fixed in time and space, that one party does to another” (ibid.). Pain et al. argue this is too narrow a definition which fails to take into account the diverse ways into which knowledge is produced. They suggest a view of impact that is not a result but a *praxis* (inspired by Paolo Freire); “a collaborative process of critical reflection on reality in order to transform it” (5). This opens up space to assess the impact of co-productions of knowledge in which “research is conducted together by a community, organisation or group together with academic researchers” (4). Impact here, moves from a fixed phenomenon to “a process often involving a gradual, porous and diffuse series of changes undertaken collaboratively” (ibid.). Impact, in this re-definition, is about communication and collaboration between the academic and the non-academic. And perhaps, in this way, impact and the humanities do speak to each other. This requires a non-academic audience that is interested in academic expertise coming from the humanities. Perhaps we, humanities scholars, should not only stop resisting the idea of research assessment, but should also slightly tweak its principal aim. The question should not be: how do we show the stakeholders high up the ladder that we have a societal relevance, but how do we communicate our value to those that we value to engage with? This audience of the humanities is, interestingly, often left out of the debate around the value of the humanities

(Benneworth 2015). I would argue that a tailor-made research assessment for the humanities might do well to integrate this perspective.

My prompt for looking into the matter of the value of the humanities was an internship at the Community-Based Research for the Humanities project at Utrecht University, The Netherlands. I learned about a research approach that moves away from the idea that value is created when science transposes its knowledge to society, towards the production of knowledge as a collaboration between the academic and the non-academic world. In the bachelor course that the project designed, students can set up collaborative research projects with local (often nonprofit) organizations in order to create knowledge (together) that is meaningful for the community (of that organization). In other words, the project creates a platform for the academic expertise of young researchers and the community knowledge of the organization to come together and communicate. One of my main tasks was to talk to focus groups of the project's different audiences, in order to find out what kind of symposium the project should organize later this year, which meets the needs of all these different groups. In talking to team members, humanities students, local organizations and faculty members (who are doing their own version of socially engaged, collaborative research), I discovered a couple of things.

The first is that it is not that difficult to get non-academic groups interested in collaboration with the humanities. While they do not necessarily seem to look for humanities knowledge in particular, access to academic expertise (along with the expectation that this can generate value for the organization) and the possibility to be part of a community that brings the non-academic and the academic together is enough for local nonprofits to want to invest. Admittedly, it stings somewhat that humanities knowledge is not their main focus for collaboration in this project. But who is to blame for this? Talking to friends and family about my internship and this research, they repeatedly asked me: What is the humanities, exactly? This is always a question of: What kinds of disciplines does it comprise and why are they grouped together? This question exists, and even within the academic community it takes effort to find

certain guiding principles to tie humanities disciplines together into one historically coherent story (see Bod, 2013). Many people do not respond well to things that are unclear or unfamiliar, which is another thing I learned from interviewing all these groups of people in the context of figuring out their needs for the event. Next to this, when speaking to humanities students I realized that they are not, in fact, humanities students. They are students of history first, of media and culture, of philosophy, of Spanish, of literature, of all those individual disciplines. How can we communicate the value of our faculty, as a whole, to the non-academic world, if the next generation of researchers does not identify themselves in those terms?

Another thing that stood out with regards to the students is that they refer to their studies in terms that align with the language of the research assessment discourse. They all want to know what kind of ‘impact’ (the exact word they use) their studies can make in society and most lack a clear picture of where they will end up, professionally, after they finish their studies. They like what they do, but they struggle to find practical, social ‘value’ in their studies. While every discipline within the faculty makes sure to invite alumni every year to help students construct an image of the future, the sentiment of uncertainty seems to remain. While I mentioned before that the humanities seems to have trouble communicating its value to areas outside of its own, these interviews actually imply that this problem is present even within the faculty.

At the start of my internship, I was initially interested in finding out more about the organizations’ perspective on the humanities. I wanted to get behind the response of the value of academic knowledge in general and see if I could identify ways in which they articulate an interest (or disinterest) in the humanities without them actually being aware of this. This I wanted to do by interviewing them about their experience with student projects so far, and by inviting them to share more about their organization, the values they hold and the goals they are aiming for. Using discourse analysis, I would look at their stories and identify any ideological biases these might reveal. Considering the fact that this research can aid communication between the faculty and future non-academic collaborative partners, this, in its own right, would

still be a worthwhile venue to pursue. However, after talking to students and identifying the discrepancy of identification and their language use that corresponds to the language of the current socio-economic climate, which effectively undervalues the humanities, it seemed important to not *just* focus on the non-academic audience.

We saw that the question of how to assess impact in the humanities appropriately, at some point in the debate around research assessment, moved to a question of ideological biases underpinning higher education policy directed at the humanities. In other words, it became important to figure out how those stakeholders that hold the power to affect the direction of the university perceive the faculty of the humanities. What I want to suggest is that it is now time to direct our attention to the other end of that ladder, not to those that hold the power, but to those groups that are *affected by* the direction the faculty takes. The purpose of the higher education policy discourse research was to identify any areas in which the humanities might need to work on improving transparency and communication, to circulate clearly articulated and accessible narratives of who they are and what they do, so that these end up with those holding (certain) power. In other words, the research argued that a lack of clear communication encourages uninformed value judgments. While students and local organizations (the examples I gathered in the context of the project) do not hold very much power in comparison to policymakers, the same logic still works in this other direction. It is important to have an informed understanding of how our new generation of researchers, as well as those groups that are interested to work with them, perceive this faculty, so that we can alter our communication accordingly. With Pain et al., investigating this is, in a way, an assessment of 'impact', if we understand this as praxis, not as result. This, as we have seen, is a *collaborative process of critical reflection on reality in order to transform it*, and in the context of the research I am proposing this would mean a reflection on the reality of the view of the humanities as it lives in the imagination of the audiences with which this faculty collaborates (here preliminary identified as students and non-academic partners).

While beyond the scope of this paper, to move forward I propose a further inquiry into Utrecht University's faculty of the humanities. This could be done by measuring the published arguments from the international humanities scholars on the value of the humanities against the perspective of students, non-academic organizations, and faculty members affiliated to Utrecht University. A similar format as the one for the Community-Based Research for the Humanities report on the symposium could be used, where interviews are set up with focus groups and people are asked, quite simply, for their input about their experience with (collaboration with) this faculty (so far), or about their reasons for choosing their studies, or their specialisation, or for collaborating with students or researchers from specific disciplines. The group of faculty members can be added to this experiment because it seems appropriate to investigate whether faculty members' perspectives align with that of the international community or not. The question to answer is: How do students, non-academic research partners and faculty members of one local university's faculty of the humanities perceive the humanities? In this research one studies the different perspectives on the humanities in a local context, to find out why the humanities in general may have problems communicating its value to both outside audiences and its own community. Focusing on only one local context might be done with the aim to set up a study which can be repeated, which brings a certain added value: In this paper we have encountered research which suggests that value judgments about research value in the education policy discourse are nationally dispersed (Benneworth & Jongbloed 2010; Olmos-Peñuela et al. 2014; Olmos-Peñuela et al. 2015; Reale et al. 2018) and a repeatable study allows for the possibility for this to emerge in other local contexts, while also leaving room for differences between national universities to emerge. Ultimately, gaining more insight into the perspectives of those audiences that do not immediately influence policy decisions can give us a new angle from which to approach the scholarly debate around the value of the humanities.

Works cited

Bate, Jonathan, ed. *The public value of the humanities*. A&C Black, 2011.

Belfiore, Eleonora. "'Impact', 'value' and 'bad economics': Making sense of the problem of value in the arts and humanities." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 14.1 (2015): 95-110.

Belfiore, Eleonora, and Anna Upchurch. *Humanities in the twenty-first century: Beyond utility and markets*. Springer, 2013.

Benneworth, Paul. "Tracing how arts and humanities research translates, circulates and consolidates in society.. How have scholars been reacting to diverse impact and public value agendas?." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 14.1 (2015): 45-60.

Benneworth, Paul, and Ben Jongbloed. "Who matters to universities? A stakeholder perspective on humanities, arts and social sciences valorisation." *Higher Education* 59.5 (2010): 567-588.

Benneworth, Paul, Magnus Gulbrandsen, and Ellen Hazelkorn. *The impact and future of arts and humanities research*. Springer, 2016.

Bod, Rens. *A new history of the humanities: The search for principles and patterns from antiquity to the present*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Brooks, Peter, and Hilary Jewett, eds. *The humanities and public life*. Fordham University Press, 2014.

Donovan, Claire, and Magnus Gulbrandsen. "Introduction: Measuring the impact of arts and humanities research in Europe." *Research Evaluation* 27.4 (2018): 285-286.

Jay, Paul. *The Humanities "Crisis" and the Future of Literary Studies*. Springer, 2014.

Nussbaum, Martha Craven. *Cultivating humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Harvard University Press, 1998.

_____. *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities*. Vol. 2. Princeton, NJ: Princeton university press, 2010.

Olmos-Peñuela, Julia, Elena Castro-Martínez, and Pablo D'Este. "Knowledge transfer activities in social sciences and humanities: Explaining the interactions of research groups with non-academic agents." *Research Policy* 43.4 (2014): 696-706.

Olmos-Peñuela, Julia, Paul Benneworth, and Elena Castro-Martínez. "Are sciences essential and humanities elective? Disentangling competing claims for humanities' research public value." *Arts and humanities in higher education* 14.1 (2015): 61-78.

Pain, Rachel, et al. *Mapping Alternative Impact: Alternative approaches to impact from co-produced research*. Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, Durham University, 2015,

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/beacon/MappingAlternativeImpactFinalReport.pdf>

Plumb, John Harold. *Crisis in the humanities*. London: Pelican Originals, 1964.

Reale, Emanuela, et al. "A review of literature on evaluating the scientific, social and political impact of social sciences and humanities research." *Research Evaluation* 27.4 (2018): 298-308.

Small, Helen. *The value of the humanities*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Sommer, Doris. *The work of art in the world: Civic agency and public humanities*. Duke University Press, 2013.

van den Akker, Wiljan. "Yes we should; research assessment in the humanities." *Research Assessment in the Humanities*. Springer, Cham, 2016. 23-29.

Appendix A: Logs to Debbie

Initial research plans

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)
Thu 2020-03-26 14:41
To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)

Dear Debbie,

Nice to meet you too.

Diving right in with some context: My first and foremost goal is to try and make a connection with the society at large, because this is not something I have had the chance to do before in my studies and the internship seemed like the perfect opportunity. I have no experience in community-based research so I am very much looking forward to it. Jocelyn and I discussed briefly what kind of research might be of interest to me and we decided the assessments of needs/expectations from community partners would fit my aim of connecting with the community.

Here are some of the ideas I had so far:

I imagined the research to be community-based in that it departs from an inquiry into the needs of the community, but perhaps more ethnographic in its method of assessing that information. This might mean I physically go to the organizations and be an observer-participant, talking (preferably informally) to both the organizational members as well as to the actual community/participants. It would be great if I can see for myself what these organizations actually do and how community members respond to it. (Obviously, there are some ethical issues here, but it would be a good challenge for me to figure out how to responsibly deal with this.) It would be useful to conduct more formal interviews with the stakeholders, to specifically hear from them what they expect from the Humanities in collaborative research. These interviews, conversations, and my observational notes can then be analyzed to make an assessment of what community partner's needs/expectations/challenges are.

This is how I had imagined it so far, but given the current circumstances this means that parts of this plan (the participatory part, which I looked forward to) are simply not possible anymore. I understand that the assessment, however, could still be done (video-interviews with the stakeholders for example), but this might take some of the excitement and challenge out of the research for me.

This week I have also been considering the possibility of postponing the research part to September, in the hope that life will be back to normal by then.

I would love to hear your thoughts and maybe get a fresh perspective on these things. And Jocelyn mentioned the research might be valuable for another avenue you are pursuing, so I am curious to hear more about this.

Warm regards,

Fenna

Research outline

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)

Fri 2020-04-24 16:34

To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)

Dear Debbie,

The following is an update on this week's progress/ thoughts.

I have now gotten around to reading most of the texts you sent me. I still have to read the Devault and McCoy text and Jocelyn suggested I look at the Bate text on the public value of the Humanities.

It took some time for it to click with me that what I am proposing to do with my research is look at this matter (of the societal value of Hum) empirically, because I was so focused on who the 'community' is and what they have to say, that this did not resonate with me at first. But now I actually have a sense of the context in which I want to explore this external perspective.

I think we briefly discussed in our first meeting that for Anna Poletti's class (Research Lab) we are drafting a 'State of the Art' and that I wanted to use my internship research for this assignment? The State of the Art is basically an overview of all perspectives in the current debate around one's topic, followed by explaining why one's research makes sense as a next step in this debate. I am honestly not that skilled in solidly situating research questions (or creating solid research questions) so it would be very useful for me to spend adequate time on this. In Research Lab we started by composing a question according to a three-step logic (taken from Booth - The Craft of Research), where in 1. you state your topic, in 2. you ask an indirect question to indicate what you don't understand about this topic, and in 3. you answer the 'so what?' question. Mine now looks like this:

- 1 I am studying how community organizations involved in the CBRftH project think they might benefit from collaboration with Humanities students/researchers
- 2 Because I want to find out how people external to the Humanities see/consider the Humanities
- 3 In order to help my reader understand what the societal and practical value of the Humanities is

Jocelyn suggested I could actually ask team members if they know any other organizations that are not connected to the project, because it would be interesting to get their perspective as well. And you also mentioned in your feedback that I might ask some students about how they consider the Humanities and its value for work outside of academia. This would then change that three-part structure a bit. Also, you both mentioned that most organizations probably will not be interested in Humanities research per se, just in research. So that is making me think about if

I can frame my interviews in such a way that I get people to think specifically about Humanities research and tell their 'stories' accordingly. But at first glance that makes me feel like I would be forcing them in a certain direction and that seems problematic. In any case, these are some things to think about.

For now, I want to use that Research Lab assignment to do some exploratory research, and that would mean looking at what the current debate (last 5-10 years) on the 'crisis' of the Humanities. Jocelyn mentioned there is a lot of theory on it (and I have read some of it in my studies already), but probably very little empirical research. So I will be gathering all the ones that have also taken public perspectives into account or have 'measured' the crisis and/or the value of Hum in other ways. And then I will explain where this/my research fits in. It's a 1500-2000 word assignment and the first draft is due next Friday. I hope you agree it makes sense to start here for now!

In other news, I went through my inbox yesterday and I noticed I had missed something important: I had asked my program coordinator a while ago if it would be alright if you were to supervise this internship and she said yes of course, but she also said that if you had not supervised an RMA internship before, that you might want to contact Anna (who is also the internship coordinator in my program) to go over the specifics. My apologies for bringing this up so late!

I think that's it for now. Hope you have a good weekend!

Best,
Fenna

Draft state of the art

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)

Mon 2020-05-04 11:00

To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)

FVeenstra3642542_SotA_Draft.docx 13 KB

Dear Debbie,

Attached is the assignment I handed in for Research Lab last week; a draft state of the art on my internship research. I will get feedback this week and on Wednesday there is a seminar on Teams where we will discuss the feedback we got and where we have to identify three things that we want to change. Perhaps we can go over the results in our meeting on Thursday?

Friday 15 May is another deadline for a writing assignment on methodology and theoretical framework, which would again be great to use for this internship research. I had a meeting with Jocelyn today and she directed me to the surfdrive (in the alternative internship file) for some

literature on how to conduct ethnographic research digitally etc., so that might be a good place to start.

You also asked me to remind you that I wanted to use our meeting to discuss your experience with last year's symposium and with the project in general. I have had some meetings with other team members and it turns out this usually takes a bit longer than expected, so it might be useful to separate this from the supervision meeting. What do you think?

Best,
Fenna

Sharing knowledge

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)

Wed 2020-05-13 17:04

To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)

Dear Debbie,

Of course I would be willing to share that assignment, it's on its way to XXX as we speak 😊 I did make the assumption that it was about the content of my specific assignment and not the barebone instruction on what a state of the art is, I hope I assumed right!

For the workshops, XXX has invited me to the try-out of the explainer video workshop next Monday, so I already RSVP'd that one! But I would love to join your ethnography workshop on Tuesday. Could you share the preparatory material with me?

Best,
Fenna

Reframing research aim*Veenstra, F. (Fenna)**Tue 2020-05-19 17:47**To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)*

Hi Debbie,

Thank you so much for that workshop, it was a new experience and very helpful for me!

Talking to XXX about my research in the breakout room also reminded me that I had promised you a log last week.

Here is a short update:

While I was working on methodology and theoretical framework, I realized that I still keep losing track of what my actual aim is. This is probably because I get a lot of new input as an intern in this project all the time. And maybe also because I focused on the state of the art first.

So I am taking a few steps back and focusing on putting a problem statement on paper, where I contextualize the problem, show why it matters and set my aims and objective. Then, I will (re)set the research question and move on to methodology from there.

I would like to send this to you by the end of this week for feedback, if that's okay?

And could we also plan another online meeting? The workshop also reminded me that it is incredibly helpful to keep talking to others about the subject.

Best,
Fenna

Workload too high*Veenstra, F. (Fenna)**Wed 2020-05-27 16:49**To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)*

Dear Debbie,

Good to hear from you!

It would be great if we could meet for a bit on Friday. I am available at 11:30 and at 16:00 hrs. Let me know if this works for you.

I have a bit of a problem that we might discuss, which is that the regular internship tasks keep lining up, leaving me with little time left to sit down for research. I might have to change some of my research to make it finishable before the end of June (I will also discuss this with Jocelyn soon).

In any case, hope to see you on Friday!

All the best,
Fenna

Theory, method and limit

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)

Tue 2020-06-02 16:58

To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)

FVeenstra_reflections + rough draft theo framework _ methodology .docx 11 KB

Dear Debbie,

My apologies for sending you this so late, but I have managed to draft some pages that I can eventually turn into a theoretical framework and methodology. It is a very rough draft! My main goal was to just get something on paper, so it also includes some reflection. I have been exploring the ways in which other disciplines set up methodologies, so I am also experimenting with some terms, such as 'non-probability sampling,' which I have never used in Comp. Lit.

It has been a while since I have set up a research like this (papers are different somehow), since I have only done this once for my BA thesis which was in 2015, so that does mean I am currently being confronted with the fact that I am really still learning how to do research (on a research master level).

One other thing that I wanted to note is that I am noticing I am reaching a limit with regards to the amount of interviews I can (comfortably) do. Though I love talking to people for this internship, I am realizing that there is a reason I am in a literary studies program, since I find I might prefer working with 'texts'. This draft I am sending you is moving away from the original idea of setting up interviews with organization representatives and towards an idea of gathering their stories that are already out there / that are naturally occurring. Since I am running out of time, I thought it might also be useful to set up something which I can do independently.

I can understand that you might not be able to read this before our meeting tomorrow, in which case I am happy to walk you through it.

All the best,
Fenna

Worries about time*Veenstra, F. (Fenna)**Tue 2020-06-09 19:42**To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)*

Dear Debbie,

Last week you mentioned in our meeting that I could reach out to you if I was feeling uncertain about my progress, so here I am.

I am planning out the final weeks of my internship and I am doubtful, again, if I can finish everything in time. Last week was fully booked with interviews and currently I am going through all the data I collected for the symposium report, the outline of which I will present to the team next week on Thursday. I will need all days leading up to that to work on that, simply because I have hours and hours of recordings to go through. Then I will get feedback and have to adjust the final report accordingly, which I will hopefully get done on Friday 19 June.

In theory that would leave me with one week in which I could focus on the research (analyze the data and write a paper), but I am not sure it will. Firstly because I have some loose ends to tie up, some people wanted a follow up after the report is done. And then there is this: I have to hand in an internship report at the end of my internship, along with a research report. While the second report is basically the paper that I am already writing, the first one is different from the symposium report I will be presenting to the team. It has a lot of added reflection subheadings and this means it will require extra time to work on. Since the UU internship website says: hand in both reports at the end and not after the end, I am assuming this needs to be done as part of the internship (perhaps I am wrong there, in that case I would be curious to hear what the procedure is with this). I think this means I am left with 2, maybe 3 days to analyze the data for my research and write up a report. In my experience with writing papers, this is not enough time.

My main worry is that I will not be able to finish the research in time and that you will have to assess my research report as unsatisfactory, which I think would mean my entire internship cannot be considered a part of my RMA program. Obviously, that would be really disappointing. Another thing is that the community partners I was setting up meetings with (which I told you about last time) have stopped responding or postponed the meeting, which makes me uncertain I will get a chance to speak with them. Because you also said this short reflection on the humanities is important for the project, I am noticing I am worried that leaving this out will, again, render the research report unsatisfactory. And a lesser worry is that I also do not think I will be able to find the headspace to think about how to present the research report creatively, which would be too bad, because I think that would be a great lesson for me to learn how to do so.

So, that's a pile of worries that came knocking on my door in the last couple of days. I hope you can help me in some way!

Best,
Fenna

Regained confidence

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)
Wed 2020-06-10 13:33
To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)

Dear Debbie,

Thank you for your response, I really appreciate it. I must say it helped right away.

Those suggestions about the recordings are really helpful, I have never worked with interviews before and was not sure what the way to go is, so these tips are good to hear.

I will talk to Jocelyn about how much the symposium report and internship report should differ.

You mention a lot of different solutions for finalizing the research report while strapped for time, thank you for this, in my overwhelmed state I did not see all these options, as you may understand. I think having them at the forefront of my mind now will already make it easier to navigate the whole thing.

Both reports are due Friday the 26th.

And it is really reassuring to see the simple phrase 'This is not going to happen' below my main worry.

And the part about reflecting on the humanities myself and working with what I have and that research is always a work in progress really puts things in perspective. I realize I felt a bit cornered perhaps, but now I see that it is still a process of creating something, which can actually be really fun!

I feel a lot more confident, so at this point I do not have any follow up questions. Thanks Debbie!

All the best,
Fenna

Consent matters in the internship report

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)
Sun 2020-06-21 19:07
To: Cole, D.L. (Deborah)

Dear Debbie,

Hope you are well!

Would you have time for an online meeting in this final week of my internship? I am trying to create a research report using the knowledge I currently have and I think it would be helpful to talk about it some more.

I want to combine the knowledge that I gathered for the presentation about the 'symposium' with the stuff I have written and sent to you before and I am running into some questions about consent. I have told all the people I interviewed that the information they give me would be shared only with the project team, but if I want to make it part of the results section this will end up at the internship office as well. I am wondering if it is possible to anonymize things to such a degree that I can use that data more freely.

Would be great if we can discuss these matters!

All the best,
Fenna

Appendix B: Logs to Jocelyn

Doubts in times of corona

From: Veenstra, F. (Fenna)

Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2020 09:59

To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)

Dear Jocelyn,

I hope this email finds you well and that you are still in good health. What strange times! My guess is you have lots to tend to, so I hope the following does not add too much to it:

I was wondering if you and the rest of the team members have giving any thoughts on how to move forward with the CBR project during this pandemic? The symposium is a big part of these final months of work and I can imagine this needs to be reconsidered entirely. I am especially curious about any consequences for my internship. I can imagine this, too, needs to be rethought.

Here are some of my own thoughts and concerns:

I can imagine a lot might still be done from home, and I would certainly be up for that! However, I do have some concerns about how well-integrated a new member (me) could be through digital means, because I am very much looking forward to being part of a team.

Currently, I am also working on the internship work plan, and I am running into the problem that I cannot say with certainty what my main tasks will be.

For the research I plan to undertake, it would be most valuable to speak to stakeholders in person and get a sense of what the organizations do by actively participating as well, for instance.

Also, I think any data I would be able to collect over the coming months might be tinged with coronavirus concerns, which might make it less representative.

As you can see, I have given these things some thought, but I would love to turn this interior monologue into a conversation, hence this email. It would be great to hear back from you, but I understand if this might take some time!

Best wishes,
Fenna

Saying 'yes' in times of corona*Veenstra, F. (Fenna)**Mon 2020-03-30 16:41**To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)*

Dear Jocelyn,

I hope this email finds you well and healthy.

Just wanted to let you know that I have done some reflecting and I am committed to going forward with my involvement in the project. Debbie sent me some of the things she is working on and this made me realize I am very interested in meeting everyone in the project and finding out more about their own research projects and working together with different 'minds' than I am used to. If that will have to happen through digital means, so be it!

Looking forward to starting in April and figuring out how to get the most out of the internship in these times.

Warm regards,
Fenna

Managing workload*Veenstra, F. (Fenna)**Wed 2020-04-08 10:21**To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)*

Dear Jocelyn,

There is also another idea that I wanted to run by you. We have discussed in our earlier meetings that I would be away in the week of 27 April. I had a special family trip planned that week, which is now cancelled. Because of this, I was thinking to maybe skip that week off at that point, but still use it now to start the internship one week later.

I bring it up because a lot of my block 3 deadlines have moved up, due to the current circumstances, and my two final deadlines now are scheduled for next week. This gives me no time to gather my bearings before starting the new and exciting chapter of the internship! And it also means I would be working double time in the first week, which might be doable but is not the best way to start.

What do you think about this?

Warm regards,

Fenna

Working language

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)

Wed 2020-04-22 11:09

To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)

Dear Jocelyn,

Thank you for introducing me to the team! I will be contacting them all today to plan a first meeting to get acquainted and talk about the symposium.

However, I do have one question about this. I assume the working language in the project is English, yet I realized that the team members I will be contacting today are all native Dutch speakers. I was wondering if it is okay to write my emails to them in Dutch and have the meetings in Dutch as well? Considering the fact that I will be meeting them for the first time through a screen, I think it would be helpful to bridge that distance a bit through language. If any of them prefer English, I will adjust accordingly of course.

I was also planning to CC you in all the emails I send in my position as intern, would you agree with this?

Best wishes,
Fenna

Asking for a favor

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)

Wed 2020-05-06 11:27

To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)

Dear Jocelyn,

I figured out there is one person who might have all recent contact info for studieverenigingen and student OC members within the UU Humanities and that is the studentassessor in the Faculteitsraad. For this year that is Kevin Postma. His role is to be a belangenbehartiger of all students within the faculty and has contacts with all studieverenigingen, so that is great. I drafted an email to him (below) asking if he is willing to share that information with me.

He is not in my network at all, so I feel a bit odd asking him for a favor, but I do think this might be the most efficient way. What do you think?

Warm regards,
Fenna

Consent questions

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)
Tue 2020-05-19 17:29
To Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)

Hi Jocelyn,

For the check-ins with the students I am wondering if I should also explicitly tell them what we plan to do with the information that I will gather in the (anonymous) report. The reason I ask is because in your email to them it is already framed as "part of the evaluation process" and I am assuming that they know what this means and that the information will be shared with the team. But since I don't have any record of this, I am not sure.

My main question is whether or not I should specifically ask the students if they are okay with me sharing their anonymous input with the team.

Let me know!

Best,
Fenna

Interview prep

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)
Wed 2020-05-20 12:14
To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)

Hi Jocelyn,

I am drafting an email to an interest network faculty member and am running into a question.

For students and organizations it seems clear to me that both groups have something concrete to gain from being present at the symposium. But for the faculty members this seems different. It would be great for us if they are present and for some to pitch their work, but I am a little unsure about what's in it for them. Is it a networking thing?

Do we have something to offer them or should I assess what kind of event they are interested in to get that answer?

Best,
Fenna

An independent plan

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)
Wed 2020-05-20 13:54
To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)

Hi again!

I am also sending the email below to studieverenigingen. I think talking to some bestuursleden will already be insightful, but my plan is to ask them if they think it is useful to also get in touch with students who are not representatives (and if yes, if they have ideas about setting this up).

Fenna

Presenting my results

Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn) on behalf of Project Team - CBR for the Humanities
Mon 2020-06-08 21:11
To: XXX [Team]
Subject: Symposium 2020 - Fenna presents

Dear all,

By now, all of you have talked at least once with Fenna Veenstra, who has been working as an intern for the project on-line through the entirety of block 4 with diligence and creativity. One of her main tasks has been to gather ideas to help give form to the the next public symposium coming out of the project, and to come up with recommendations for the next edition.

As Fenna's internship period will be drawing to a close in the coming weeks, we thought it would be useful to schedule a team meeting where she could present the outcomes thus far, answer questions, and get feedback on her findings and suggestions that can be worked into her final report.

It also gives us a chance to meet again as the academic year draws to an end, despite the fact that we cannot meet in person. Fenna and I sincerely hope that you will all be able to join.

Warm regards,
Jocelyn

Worries

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)
Thu 2020-06-11 15:31
To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)

Dear Jocelyn,

I have a question / concern! I was looking at what I have to hand in at the end of my internship according to the UU rules for research internships. It says I have to hand in two reports: an internship report where I tell what my tasks were and show results of that work, this also includes quite extensive reflection. The other one is the research report, which is pretty self-explanatory. As you know I am currently working on the symposium report. The way I imagine it, this is a different report altogether again. That would mean that before the end of the internship I have to draw up three reports (I am not including the student evaluation report, which we agreed would be short, in bullet points).

We talked about prioritizing the symposium report in our last meeting but, upon further reflection, I do realize that I need to divide my attention between all three of these reports if I want to get this internship approved as a research internship, which is important to me. I might need some help in navigating all this, because obviously time is running out!

Debbie suggested that perhaps my internship report and the symposium report are not that different as I imagine them to be and that it would be best if I talk to you about it.

What do you think?

Best,
 Fenna

Handing in the evaluation report

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)
Mon 2020-06-15 14:03
To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)
 Evaluation_ student projects 2019-2020.docx 12 KB

Hi Jocelyn,

Here is the evaluation report. Like we discussed, this is a bullet point collection of students' thoughts on how things are going with their current projects and how they feel the course prepared them for it.

Best,
 Fenna

Handing in draft of advice report

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)

Fri 2020-06-19 11:29

To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)

Draft Symposium Report .docx 47 KB

Hi Jocelyn,

Here is the draft!

Best,

Fenna

Handing in final advice report

Veenstra, F. (Fenna)

Mon 2020-06-22 13:38

To: Ballantyne, J.C. (Jocelyn)

Hi Jocelyn,

I got to work on the final version right away and have now uploaded it to the surfdrive!

Best,

Fenna

Appendix C: Internship work plan

1. The internship placement

1.1 Description of the internship placement

The “organisation” is a project within the faculty of the Humanities of Utrecht University called “Community-Based Research for the Humanities.”

This project uses community-based research (CBR) in the humanities to enhance students’ societal engagement and enrich their understanding of the social relevance of their education. A collaboration of the Faculty of Humanities and UCU, the project helps BA and MA students do thesis research with stakeholder organizations in Utrecht to co-create knowledge that is meaningful for the community. The program includes interdisciplinary courses to prepare students for this enterprise, establishes learning communities to support students in carrying out CBR projects, and provides opportunities for students to share their work with the community and their peers by publishing in a yearbook and presenting at a public symposium. Students exercise a broad range of academic, personal and cultural skills in the broader civic community, and reflect on contributions that the humanities can make to society, locally as well as globally.

CBR wants to empower humanities students as societally engaged scholars. Humanities CBR has figured at UU in master programs like Intercultural Communications(team members Cole, Supheert) and History and Politics of Society, and at the bachelor level in honours programs like Transdisciplinary Research Exchange (led by Dolphijn), at UCU in Field Research Aruba (led by Ballantyne), and in Onderzoek buiten de universiteit (Taal- en Cultuurstudies, School Liberal Arts, course under revision). This project builds on these collective experiences to create structural opportunities for students to benefit from CBR, as an integrated part of their degree.

Project members:

Project team leader Jocelyn Ballantyne (UCU) is responsible for organizing communication between team members, UU and external stakeholders. As team leader, she participates in project activities, ensuring that goals are met and outcomes disseminated.

Project coordinators Deborah Cole, Rick Dolphijn, Roselinde Supheert, Sanne Sprenger, Marijke Huisman (Faculty of Humanities) collaborate in design, teaching and revision of the MA-level and BA-level courses that prepare students for conducting CBR, and design and coordination of the peer-to-peer learning community. They are liaisons for project activities and outcomes in their departments, communicating with degree programs, teachers and potential academic supervisors. They serve in the editorial board for the

CBR yearbook; help monitor and evaluate the project; contribute to dissemination efforts and to the final report. Karin Scager and Karen Smit are the from the EMP (Educatieve Middelen Pool) of COLUU (Centrum voor Onderwijs en Leren Universiteit Utrecht), and they consultant the project on educative means that are available and valuable for the CBR courses. They also conduct face-to-face course evaluations with the students.

Interns provide assistance with all project activities (e.g., communication, preparing promotional and educational materials, evaluation, planning symposium, editing student CBR yearbook). And the webmaster establishes and maintains the website.

1.2 Description of the internship assignment

Responsible for three project reports

1) Symposium Report:

My task is to reflect on last year's symposium and suggest ways to improve the upcoming symposium. One problem in last year's symposium was that outreach was low (only the people who were involved in the CBR project were present). The goal of the report is to think of ways to improve outreach. I will do this reaching out to five groups of people.

Group 1: CBR project team members.

Group 2: BA students who did the CBR course.

Group 3: Faculty member who are interested in community-based research or currently involved in CBR projects

Group 4: Students who are doing a CBR internship in block 4 (year 2019-2020)

Group 5: "Other" students that currently have nothing to do with the project but might be interested in community-based research.

And I will ask these groups for their input on the symposium (via online meetings, telephone conversations, email) For the first group this will be a reflection on the last symposium. And for other groups this will be an assessment of what is needed to make them commit their presence to it. I will present this in the report and suggest a plan for the upcoming symposium based on an analysis of the collected data.

2) CBR internships Block 4 (2019-2020) Evaluation Report:

There are 7 students who are currently starting an CBR internship (in alternative circumstances due to corona). After three to four weeks I will take stock of how these students are fairing, what is going well, what hurdles they are facing. This information will be gathered anonymously and put into a report. The CBR project will use this information to make changes where necessary in next year's course.

3) Research Report (see 1.3)

1.3 Brief description of the additional practice-oriented research.

The research report is an assessment of the needs and expectations of the local community organizations which are affiliated to the project. Examples are: De Voorkamer, Taal Doet Meer, Stichting Lezen & Schrijven, Stichting Asha, InclUUision. I will make a

selection based mostly on availability (who can make the time talk to me). The CBR Humanities project links students with organizations based on students' interests and skills. What is missing is a clear narrative on what these organizations themselves identify as challenges in which Humanities research is needed, or how they see they themselves can benefit from collaboration with the Humanities. The research report will present that narrative. Beyond the project's identifiable interest, this research is valuable because it will present a picture of how people, external to the Humanities, see the Humanities.

2. Motivation and learning outcomes

2.1 Motivation

This internship is my chance to do research that is rooted in the world of the society at large. I will be part of an innovative project which aims to bring CBR to the curriculum of the Humanities in Utrecht. Since my time as a student is almost over, this is a great opportunity to still learn how community-based research works. It is an addition to my program in this sense, an addition which will expand my horizons of methods of conducting research. When I wrote my motivation letter for the RMA program Comparative Literary Studies, it said my work experience in pragmatic (non-literary) fields would bring an interesting perspective to the field. I made a promise myself that I would continue to look for ways in which I could use what I learned about people, about society and power structures of which I am a part, to make a connection with that world. This is challenging. Writing essay after essay on very specific topics has a way of getting someone out of touch with a broader reality. I see this internship as my ticket back into it. My program is heavy with cultural theory and philosophy, all of which asks of me to critically examine the world I see. Yet it also distances me from it. I want to be able to conduct qualitative research without this removal, I want to interact with the world around me and from that interaction, find new, original ways to (co-)create knowledge.

The course "Thinking Literature: Creative Forms of Knowledge" used to have "interdiscursivity" in the title as Dr. Kári Driscoll told us. This was an interdiscursive approach to literature, both in that knowledge from a variety of discourses was applied to selected literature and in that it considered the possibility of treating literature as its own knowledge-producing discourse. Challenging the notions of what we consider valid truth is what the internship builds upon, for the organization representatives in this project are treated as equal partners in the co-creation of knowledge and it builds on the assumption that the society at large can also produce valid truths that need to be taken into account.

The Masterclass "Reading Zoos in the Age of the Anthropocene" builds on the aforementioned course and introduced me to the interdisciplinary field of animal studies and related fields such as ecocriticism and multispecies ethnography. The course is largely about the "nonhuman," but it provided me with an introduction into ethnographic research methods and concurrent fieldwork (which we were expected to actually conduct in a zoo, but this, unfortunately, was cancelled due to the corona pandemic). It made me

realize how much I am looking forward to finding ways of combining my academic knowledge with an actual, real-life interaction with the world, both human and nonhuman. Learning about and conducting research with a community of organizations will be a perfect outlet for this wish (even if it is in altered circumstances due to the COVID-19 crisis).

The course “Literature Across Cultures” challenged assumptions of what we consider “culture” to be. Literature, here, illuminated how cultures move across borders, across time and space, and was treated as a transcultural and/or transnational phenomenon. The Masterclass “Narratives of Transcultural Identity” is an extension of this course, focusing on the specific topics of post-secularity and precarity. Both are social phenomena which are, arguably, experienced by the people the organizations in the CBR project represent. Doing these courses, I felt an increasing desire to have a chance to interact with those people academia deems “transcultural” or “precarious,” for example. What do they have to say about these terms? Does it actually catch the specificity of individual situations? And is it helpful for them to be termed as such, to be grouped together as such?

As an extension to the knowledge gained in these courses, the internship will be an opportunity to learn the practical skills required to reach my goals of specializing in a cultural analysis practice that is based on intersubjectivity and relationality, that is interdiscursive in its method and collaborative in its approach.

2.2 Learning outcomes

- a. Preparing for professional practice: My hope is this internship will introduce me to a method of research (community-based) that can help bridge the gap between humanist/Humanities research and the society at large. I intend to find a PhD position after my RMA and I want to conduct interdiscursive research which is ever-attuned to new societal changes. This I hope to do in collaboration with the people who create the phenomena I am interested in and I think this internship is a terrific opportunity to learn how to do just that.

I will also be part of an important project that is a collaboration between my own department of Humanities and UCU. Being a part of a team and working on a project with short- and long-term goals on an academic level will be an important new experience for me, which will gain me insights into what (parts of) my own professional career might look like in the future. It will teach me how projects like these are set up, how they are funded, and what needs to be done to keep them going. It might even inspire me to come up with innovative ideas for future projects I might possibly lead and collaboratively conduct. Importantly, it will also introduce me to those less exciting administrative evils that are part of any project, and which I will need to learn to see as an important component, requiring motivated effort and attention.

- b. Programme-specific skills and knowledge: The RMA Comparative Literary Studies is an interdiscursive program, where I frequently have to grapple with scholarship from fields such as cultural memory, media studies, affect studies, gender studies, and anthropology, to name a few. A program-specific competency is that of literary analysis, which we can apply to phenomena that are arguably not “literary”. People have stories and language, and that is, arguably a large part of what makes them people. Everything humans create and do, then, comes out of a narrative, whether it is history, identity, loneliness, religion, or even differentiation (between things/people). The CBR internship is a chance for me to apply my literary analysis to the narratives of the organizations in my own research.

Another (related) focus in my field (and beyond) is on knowledge production and legitimacy claims. Which stories do we listen to and take seriously? Community-based research builds on the assumption that the community (the people who are affected by, or organizations that respond to, phenomena we study) can create knowledge. The internship is a chance to enter into dialogue with alternative ways of knowing the world, which can supplement academic perspectives.

- c. Improving your overall academic skills: I will be part of a team and this will improve my collaborative skills, both with fellow academic researchers as with organization representatives. My communication skills will have to adapt to dialogues that include said representatives, i.e. I will have to learn how to talk about academic topics to non-academic people on a professional level. This will also improve reflective skills, for I will need to think and act in a way that is mindful and respectful of the socio-cultural context with which I will be directly involved (this is also an ethical consideration). The data I will collect from the organizations will, furthermore, need to be translated and framed into an academic/philosophical context, while also remaining accessible to a wider public. Scientifically, my skills of preparing and designing my own research will dramatically improve, since I will conduct independent research for this project (but in collaboration with both the project team and the community organizations). This means I will need to exercise my academic thinking skills to the fullest, by collecting data and critically analyzing this against a larger theoretical framework.

The CBR internship Evaluation Report will be a moment in which I see how the project is coming along and it will give me insights into the struggles students can face when doing community-based research. This can help me be ahead of obstacles in my own research and it might teach me how to deal with difficulties that are unavoidable. It will also tell me more about what a variety of students (who may have been introduced to CBR for the first time) consider valuable and productive about this method of research.

3. Supervision and reporting

3.1 Expectations and agreements relating to the supervision and feedback provided by the internship organisation

The Symposium report and the Evaluation report are commissioned by the CBR Humanities project. Jocelyn, as project leader, will provide me with clear guidelines on what the aim of the reports should be and I will get directions on content as well. After this, I will work largely independently, collecting all data and doing all necessary analysis by myself. If I need supervision of any sort, I can reach out to Jocelyn.

3.2 Expectations and agreements relating to the supervision and feedback provided by the lecturer

Debbie and I will set up weekly email logs/updates and bi-weekly online meetings to discuss questions about the research and writing process.

3.3 Agreements relating to reporting during the internship

Jocelyn and I will meet (online) twice a week on Monday and Thursday to discuss and reflect on my progress and for supervision.

3.4 Agreements relating to the final report (two-part structure)

a. Internship report

Consists of the Symposium report and the CBR Internship Evaluation Report. I will conduct the reports as commissioned by the project. The results of these reports will be used to further the project.

b. Research report

The research report is independent research, curated according to my own interests, that is nevertheless of specific value to the project. The project can use the report and all its results.

3.5 Agreements relating to the other material produced

The ownership for all other (unforeseen) material I will create is in hands of the project.

4. Research component

4.1 Description of the practice-oriented research

Title: Assessment of the expectations and needs of the community organizations in the CBR Humanities project.

The CBR Humanities project is working on building lasting relationships with organizations. These are community organizations within the locality of Utrecht who are involved in some ways with topics the Humanities engages with, ranging from literateness to integration. Examples are: De Voorkamer, Taal Doet Meer, Stichting Lezen & Schrijven, Stichting Asha, InclUUsion. Although one short term goal of the CBR project is to involve a wider range of organizations in this project, there is also a need to make sure the ones

that are in, stay in. This means the current organizations should benefit from this collaboration as well. In order to ensure this, the CBR project needs a clear vision of their expectations and needs. That is where this research project comes in. In short: this research is an assessment of the short- and long-term expectations of community organizations in the CBR Humanities project.

4.2 Main questions and subquestions

Main research question: What are the short- and long-term expectations and needs of community organizations in the CBR Humanities project?

Subquestion 1: What kinds of organizations are these? (What is their community-function, what core values determine the organizational framework, what is their target audience?)

Subquestion 2: How do the organizations reflect on their involvement in the project up until now?

Subquestion 3: What challenges do these organizations face and how do they currently deal with these challenges?

Subquestion 4: Can the organizations locate and articulate which of these challenges would benefit from Humanities expertise?

4.3 Academic framework and methodology

A literary studies perspective will guide this research. This means that I will be looking, first and foremost, for stories. What are the stories of these organizations about their involvement in the project, about themselves, about the community they work with and about their goals for the future? These stories will be treated, quite simply, as valuable knowledge. This to indicate another focus in this research, that of alternative/creative knowledge production. The community organizations, then, are its own knowledge-producing discourse, one the CBR project needs to know and understand to be able to create 'rapport' (Cole 2019) and build sustainable relationships for future collaboration.

I will collect these stories, this 'data,' through interviews with representatives of the community organizations. In normal circumstances, I would have gone to the organizations and conducted the interviews there. In the current coronavirus situation, this will have to be done via digital communication platforms, which might bring extra challenges. One foreseeable problem is that of personal distance, which can negatively affect the sense of involvement for both parties (me and the representative). In order to deal with this and other as of yet unidentified challenges, I will discuss interview frameworks with Debbie. For now, I aim to set up interviews based on creating 'rapport'. Where possible, I will record my conversations with the organization representatives and create transcripts.

Then I will use my skills of literary analysis to place their words in larger academic frameworks. What will need to be fleshed out more at this point is the decision for which framework and/or current debate. Do I arrange the interviews according to specific Humanities topics and bring these into conversation? Or do I subtract a narrative of needs and expectations and bring this into conversation with current knowledge on what outsider perspectives on the Humanities are? Whatever format will work best, the aim of the analysis is to “translate” the collected stories into an academic conception.

The combination of gathering stories through interviews and focusing on alternative knowledge production helps to situate this research within the domain of ethnography. Ethnography does include more than just interviews (Walford 2009), and I will start researching ethnographic methods more thoroughly once the internship starts, mostly to find out how I can go about conducting ethnographic research in times of social distancing and semi-lockdown.

While my research is more traditional than community-based, I do aim to create a final product of my research that can go back to this community of organizations in a form they can understand. This adds a creative dimension to this knowledge production. I will decide the details of this after conducting the interviews, because that is when I will have a sense of the kinds of organizations I am working with and also because this provides me with an opportunity to discuss what they would consider fitting.

4.4 Relevance of research for academic and / or social debate

There is a direct relevance of this research for the CBR Humanities project, since it will help in sustaining long-term relationships with community partners (the stakeholder organizations). This research is an assessment of these partners’ expectations and their perspective on the project. This is in line with current initiatives to bring the Humanities and the society at large into closer contact with each other. The Humanities deal with human issues, yet the gap between society and academia is vast. There is little common, societal understanding as to what it is we do, as researchers, and why it matters. Even though research should not have to go out of its way to prove its worth to people who have nothing to do with it, the thing about the Humanities is that a large number of people actually are, in very direct and obvious ways, affected by what it is we study. Across all discourses we deal with themes of gender, language, identity, loneliness, religion, (post)secular values, aging, diversity, belonging, education, and integration (to name a few), yet we produce this knowledge largely on our own terms. This research project adds the perspective of selected local community organizations to the intellectual debate, thus indicating that these generate knowledge which has an equal claim to legitimacy. On an even more general level, this project highlights the straightforward yet difficult assertion that all people can know important things, plain and simple, without first having to earn their right to knowledge production (this assertion, then, challenges common notions of truth legitimacy). And it highlights the task for researchers, not just to listen, but to take their subjects seriously, to consider them as experts in relevant domains.

4.5 Preliminary reference list

Briggs, Charles. "Interview." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9.1-2 (2000), 137-140.

Cole, Deborah. "Looking for rapport in the metacommunicative features of an ethnographic interview." In *Rapport and the discursive co-construction of social relations in fieldwork encounters*. Edited by Zane Goebel. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.

Corsín Jiménez, Alberto & Adolfo Estalella. "Ethnography: A Prototype." *Ethnos* 82.5 (2017), 846-866.

DeVault, Marjorie & Liza McCoy. "Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations." In *Institutional Ethnography as Practice*. Edited by Dorothy Smith. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006. 15-44.

Halseth, Greg, Sean Patrick Markey, Don Manson & Laura Ryser. *Doing Community-based Research: Perspectives from the Field*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016.

Nelson, Robin. "Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge." *Performance Research*. 11.4 (2006), 105-116.

Riemann, Gerhard. "Ethnographies of practice – Practising ethnography: Resources for self-reflective social work." *Journal of Social Work Practice* 19.1 (2006), 87-101.

Walford, Geoffrey. "For Ethnography." *Ethnography and Education* 4.3 (2009), 271-282.

4.6 Agreements relating to the outcome of the research

The outcomes are the result of my research in the context of this project and can be used in the future by the project.