Institution: Lancaster University

Unit of Assessment: Sociology (UoA23)

a. Context

The Department of Sociology at Lancaster engages in a public sociology that addresses urgent contemporary problems including energy and environment, gender-based violence, technology, welfare, financial crisis, emergencies and disasters, food, disability, media, health, well-being and austerity. It interacts with a range of stakeholders and seeks to benefit them either through shaping policy, or by working with them to co-design solutions using ground-up, problem-driven research. These beneficiaries include: diverse **public groups**, from local communities to major NGOs; **policy-makers and government experts**; **disadvantaged groups** including children in care, refugee and asylum seekers, the sick, youth, older people, women and girls subject to domestic or other violence, and indigenous peoples; **industry and business.** The Department provides support, encouragement, time and resources for researchers to develop these many forms of co-working and collaboration in order to create national and international impact for its research.

b. Approach to impact

As part of its commitment to public sociology, the Department has established and sustained processes that engender collaborative working in and for the 'public interest' across its nine Research Centres and other clusters. It encourages impact through a number of mechanisms; facilitating access to seed-corn money from departmental, Faculty and University funds; incorporating impact and engagement as criteria for staff development and promotion; encouraging staff to participate in university-level and external workshops, courses and meetings on pathways to impact; providing teaching cover for staff called to do public-facing work; and sharing best-practice.

Our impact work is also informed by a research agenda, developed over almost two decades, explicitly focused on understanding **mechanisms of public and policy engagement.** Combined with the mechanisms above, this has enabled us to develop core expertise in the contemporary understandings of impact pathways, as well as a stock of experience in working with stakeholders of many kinds to inform research planning and research activities. This was recognised with Mort receiving a 'Public Policy Prize' at the 2013 ESRC Celebrating Impact Prize Ceremony.

We employ several approaches to impact, from working with policy makers, service users and others with the aim of shaping policy and socio-technical innovation, to conducting academic-led experiments with new approaches to engagement with varied social groups:

1. **Working with policy makers, service commissioners, designers, technology developers, practitioners, service users, and service-user groups** in order to shape policies, technologies and practices. These include regulatory agencies such as the Food Standards Authority (Wynne, vice-chair, Public Dialogue Steering Group); EU Economic and Social Committee (May-Chahal, expert advisor); EU Fundamental Rights Agency (Walby, expert adviser); the UN Cartagena Biosafety Protocol of the Convention on Biodiversity (Wynne developing guidelines for the socioeconomic assessment of GMOs for developing countries); Berlin Natural History Museum (Wynne, first-ever social scientist member of Science Advisory Committee, 2012-); various companies (Büscher's research on ethical, legal and social issues in IT supported crisis management, BRIDGE and SecInCoRe projects).
2. **Commissioned provision of evidence or advice**. Researchers have been commissioned to conduct studies and furnish evidence to users. Thus Moore supplied advice on drug use prevalence and trends to Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Service, 2008-2013; the CEO of the NCT (formerly National Childbirth Trust) invited advice from Tyler and Roberts on NCT activities, 2012; Walby supplied evidence on indicators of gender-based violence against women to the UN Task Force on Violence Against Women, 2008, and is currently working with the European Parliament to develop a Directive on gender-based violence; Wynne was invited to provide advice on public attitudes to GM foods and labelling issues to large food retailers and producers inc. Unilever, Walmart-Asda, Northern Foods, Sainsbury, Tesco, at the annual meeting of Cert-ID in July 2011; and advice to Austrian Government, and European Commission D-G SANCO (Consumer Protection and Safety), on assessment of socioeconomic

risks from GM crops and foods (2011-12); invited participant in Norwegian Government Centre for Biosafety (GenOk, Trömso) advice to government, on policy responses to newly-discovered risks from GM crops, January-February 2013; Walby commissioned by UNESCO and the European Parliament on gender equality issues in finance and violence; and Mort & Roberts are working with Lancashire County Council to redesign its commissioned telecare services.

3. **Participation in public inquiries or fora** on the basis of reputation, for example May-Chahal, member DfE Munro Review of Child Protection; Shove, submission to House of Lords Select Committee on Climate Change; Wynne (as founder-member 2009) worked with European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER) to develop European Parliament amendments for EC legislative proposals on GM crops (April-July 2011); Mort provided evidence to the UK Government's Trident Alternatives Review.

4. **Participation in public debates** via mass media, including interviews in print, radio and television (Fortier in *Der Standard*, Vienna, and on Radio-Canada; Tyfield, *New Yorker*; Wynne on *SkyTV News*; Tyler, May-Chahal, Moore, Urry, Mort, Shove, Hui on *BBC Radio 4*); letter editorials (Tyfield, *Guardian*) and high-profile public fora such as exhibitions, public lectures and public events (Urry, Wynne and Shove in climate change public lectures at British Library, 2011; Wynne invited speaker to UK Parliament All-Party Group on Agroecology, 2013; Cesagen public lectures and debates with invited speakers such as Nobel Prizewinner Sir John Sulston FRS, in 2012).

5. **Bringing diverse groups together to co-design solutions to shared problems.** For instance, NESTA report on Game Changing: Disruptive Low Carbon Innovation in China brought together UK and Chinese government scientific and technical experts; Dant, McNally, Buscher and Suchman's EPSRC-funded Catalyst project works with computer scientists to facilitate a citizen-led co-production approach to IT technological innovation; Mort's work on disasters, disease management and flood protection also involve facilitating and coordinating between different groups of experts and users; and May-Chahal's ESRC work on minimizing gambling harm involves convening seminars for local and national politicians, the gaming industry, probation and prison officers. Similarly, there is the designing of interactions with stakeholders into the research, rather than after the research. This is especially shown in the ESRC-EPSRC-funded DEMAND Research Centre that is working with EDF and Transport for London from its inception. The year-long programme Experimentality, curated by Szerszynski 2009-10, explored and encouraged experimentation and creativity in a range of cultural forms, by bringing academics into interaction with artists, the public and cultural organisations such as the Academy of Urbanism; the Royal Society; FutureEverything; the Folly AND Festival; Lancaster Litfest; and the Storey Gallery, Lancaster. It engaged in new kinds of impact across 5 interdisciplinary workshops, 2 international conferences, 2 public debates in Manchester and at the Royal Society, 3 art exhibitions and a series of arts events in the NorthWest.

6. **Shaping training in professional or technical forums.** Shove's practice-based approach to climate change mitigation led to a training partnership with the Scottish Government; Tyler's work on immigration has been cited by the Refugee Council, Bail for Immigration Detainees, the Red Cross, Asylum Aid and the Migrant Rights Network; Wynne taught on the European Food Safety Authority-EU COST Action Training Programme for Risk Assessment of GM Crops and Trees; Büscher's work on ELSI and social media in crisis management led to public lectures at the Annual Chief Fire Officer's Conference in Ireland, Nordic Disaster Mitigation Conference 2013 and the Unified Incident Command and Decision Support System Webinar; Walby helped UNDP train its field workers to measure violence against women.

7. **Working to establish new fora for public debate.** Researchers have been instrumental in establishing new NGOs such as Suchman, in being a founding member of International Committee for Robot Arms Control. While others have brought matters of public interest to expert or professional forums (Wynne, publications in professional journal such as EMBO Reports, with responses from European Food Safety Authority; May-Chahal, segments on online PolicyReviewTV; Tyfield on http://www.chinadialogue.net), or by working directly with mass media to improve public awareness (Moore working with a Times journalist on drugs and nightlife).

c. Strategy and plans

The UoA's impact strategy is designed to support diverse activities to increase the reach and

significance of the impact of its research – in particular:

1. To ensure that **impact pathways become an integral component** in research design from the outset (following the model of BRIDGE and SecInCoRe, which include Advisory Boards of senior international police, fire and medical emergency response officers as well as professional bodies such as British Association of Public Safety Officials).

2. To **extend an impact-oriented approach** to other domains of research in the Department's research profile (for example, emerging problems in health, media, science, technology, energy and global consumption patterns, and working with vulnerable and marginalized groups such as migrants and asylum seekers).

3. To pursue **methodologically and substantively inventive approaches** that support different or altered relations with relevant stakeholders, or that bring new topics of public interest to the attention of relevant social groups (for example, in a new project, 'Policy Beta', Fish is helping develop a petition-generating software platform for Pirate Party UK, a political party advocating internet freedom; and the Singleton and Mort's ESRC CASE project 'Homeshare' adopts action research to pilot innovative homeshare arrangements for people with support needs).

4. To continue providing institutional support to researchers developing **new approaches to impact** (for example, Cesagen funded the Sociomics Core Facility to develop new methods of tracking and visualizing global patent activity in biotechnology in order to furnish evidence for global governance of intellectual property in both the UN Convention on Biodiversity and WIPO; Szerszynski is working with One World Analytics to further develop methods of making visible networks of funding, knowledge production and patent activity in high-stakes research areas such as climate engineering).

5. To **sustain existing engagements** with key stakeholders, decision-makers and regulatory bodies (the European Food Standards Agency quotes Wynne's work in the UK from the preceding decade). Pathways to impact can extend over more than a decade in building relationships that led to further forms of participation. In certain cases, this led to wider impacts on public debates or to local changes in practice. These include membership of governing bodies (Wynne, V-C of the Food Standards Agency's Public Dialogue Steering Group; Walby, UK National Commission for UNESCO); as well as repeated or long term participation in projects (Büscher in crisis management organisations, May-Chahal's involvement in the recently formed N8 Policing Initiative engaging with Police and Crime Commissioners).

6. To continue to **invest time in exploring and developing** relationships with government, civil society groups, scientists and other experts in public and private settings relating to significant social, economic and political issues by advising and commenting on major policy initiatives at all levels. Importantly, we expect new kinds of impact to emerge as we work with and alongside many different kinds of organisation, public/private, paid/voluntary, and establishment/critical in ways that accommodate and develop their practice.

7. To develop and **make freely accessible in-house expertise and advice on pathways to impact** at all stages of research, beginning with research design and identification of potential stakeholders through to evaluation of impacts in the wake of research, by means of department seminars, through research convenor advice, and throughout the process of research planning.

8. To continue to **monitor pathways to impact** and share best practice.

d. Relationship to case studies

The four case-studies display the main approaches to impact, from providing targeted expert to the co-production of solutions with diverse social groups:

1. 'From attitudes to practices' (Shove) is research led, and shows how research into everyday practice can change how policy makers think and act on a very large-scale problem.
2. 'Shaping ethical provision, care quality and design sensitivity in new health technologies' (Mort/Roberts/Mackenzie) brings together work with service providers, industry, third sector organisations and citizens to develop frameworks for policy and service design/development.
3. 'Knowledge, action and experiment: participatory environmental governance in Loweswater' (Waterton) developed a new form of participatory governance and public involvement.
4. 'Child protection in a digital world' (May-Chahal) shows the value of co-design with practitioners, technical experts and participants.