



Past Matters, Research Futures

A Conference for Early Career Researchers
AHRC Care for the Future: Thinking Forward through the Past

Call for proposals

Royal Society, London, 12-13 December 2016

Past Matters, Research Futures will showcase the exciting research conducted by Early Career Researchers (ECRs) related to Care for the Future: Thinking Forward through the Past, one of four strategic research themes supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). ECRs are represented in the theme in a variety of ways, and are recognised as playing a key role in its development, dynamism and legacy. ECRs researching in fields with strong links to the theme, but who are not funded within the theme, are also invited to apply.

We welcome proposals for papers, panels, workshops, and discussion groups, and also encourage applications incorporating creative modes of presentation, including film screenings, music, artwork and performance. These should come from ECRs¹ who have been involved in Care for the Future funded research projects, the Labex Pasts in the Present programme, or whose research closely aligns to the Care for the Future theme (see theme description below). Proposals may come from individuals or project/cross-project team duos, and may also include representatives from non-academic partner organisations.

Conference Themes:

- Fact, fiction and cultural representation
- Selling the Past – Securing the Future? Commercialisation and commoditisation of the past
- Anniversaries and commemorations
- Environmental Histories and Sustainable Legacies
- Instrumentalising the Past

Further details on each of these areas of interest can be found below.

About the Conference

The conference aims to raise the profile of arts and humanities research within affiliated academic institutions and partner (and potential partner) organisations, as well as to highlight the public value of collaboration, both national and international. Emphasis will be placed on the processes and particular challenges of early-career research and partnership working as well as outputs, and on activities that encourage the development of a sustainable, interdisciplinary research community that will function successfully as part of the theme's legacy. The conference also aims to foster open and honest conversation in order to better understand the future opportunities and requirements of working in partnership with non-academic organisations.

¹ 'ECR' is defined as within eight years of the award of your PhD/equivalent professional training OR within six years of your first academic appointment. 'First academic appointment' refers to any paid contract of employment, either full-time or part-time, which lists research and/or teaching as the primary function. These durations exclude any period of career break, e.g. for family care or health reasons.



Contributors are encouraged to explore research futures through the themes highlighted. Sessions will also seek to:

- Document the opportunities, challenges, and support needs of what we term the ‘new researcher’, i.e. those with roles that necessitate engagement with non HEI organisations and the impact agenda
- Recognise the research assistant or fellow as a career in its own right and as full members of staff in University departments
- Understand the often fragmented but creative nature of personal research ‘portfolios’
- Highlight the diverse array of activity that can make up an ECR’s workload
- Illustrate the importance of collaboration with non-HEIs

We wish to build a lasting, sustainable research community and have plans to facilitate this following the conference. There will be opportunities for networking opportunities as well as the chance to discuss and build ideas for research futures. Outcomes relating to the ‘new researcher’ will be cultivated and disseminated to UK research councils, academic institutions and potential research partner organisations.

Background to the event

In February 2014 Care for the Future held a very successful workshop for Early Career Researchers, where the opportunity for a larger event was noted. ECRs play a significant role in the future, drive and legacy of the theme, and the need to provide opportunities for ECRs to participate in, lead, and manage projects has been a theme priority. It was also noted that ECRs in particular, due to early career work pressures, might have fewer opportunities to network outside of their own universities, sectors, or disciplines.

The goals of the first ECR workshop were to bring together ECRs in a collaborative atmosphere, to allow conversations to take place and to facilitate effective networking, to create a constituency of funded ECR research and to also consider how to frame research around these connections – across the theme, arts and humanities disciplines, and academic and other research organisations. The aspiration for this event is to provide space for theme and theme-related ECRs to showcase their research, connect with partners, develop new transdisciplinary research initiatives and discuss how theme research can best progress.

Format for submission

Please submit your 300-word abstract via this form: <http://goo.gl/forms/ZoBUPYRoGEFyiqpf2> **by 31 July 2016**. You will need to include a short bio, brief details about your connection to Care for the Future, which conference theme your activity most closely suits, and your activity’s resource requirements. Applicants can submit up to 2 contributions/presentations to the conference. We will notify successful applicants in early September following an assessment of the applications by the ECR Conference Steering Committee. We anticipate a maximum of 100 delegates will attend, including presenters and attendees.

Registration and accommodation

There will be no registration fee. Meals, refreshments and accommodation (to a maximum of 2 nights) will be provided. Bursaries are available for reasonable travel costs (standard class) for



reimbursement following the event. **Applicants must therefore commit to attending both days of the conference (Monday approximately 9am – 9pm and Tuesday 9 – 5pm).**

ECR Conference Steering Group

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For further information please contact Christine Boyle, AHRC Care for the Future Theme Administrator, at c.boyle@exeter.ac.uk or 01392 725073.

#PastMatters

<http://careforthefuture.exeter.ac.uk/events/>



Proposed Themes – Further information

Potential areas for discussion are expected to include, but are not restricted to:

Fact, fiction and cultural representation

This theme will explore the way we come to ‘feel’ or ‘know’ history through different cultural expressions and media (books, films, theatre, exhibitions, ‘histotainment’, web documentaries, blogs, etc.). Attention will focus on how these different cultural expressions reflect and help shape social representations of the past, the present and the future.

The panel welcomes proposals that address the following questions:

- What is the relationship between fact and fiction, between official, national, histories and localised personal experience, and how is each archived, remembered, and researched?
- What happens at different stages of the representation process (production, consumption and recycling) and what are the respective roles of commissioners, authors, commentators and audiences?
- To what extent can different cultural representations influence the place and role of ‘academic’ history?

Contributions addressing the full range of time depth, human and natural histories are invited as well as those considering historical futures and future histories.

Selling the Past – Securing the Future?

This theme seeks to address issues arising from the commercialisation and commoditisation of the past. The ever-increasing rise in visitor numbers to historic sites suggests a growing public appetite (however broadly defined) to stand on the spots where history was made. This panel asks what role the higher education sector plays in ensuring that visitors can interpret and understand what they see.

The panel welcomes paper/activity proposals that address the following issues:

- What role does heritage tourism and the historic environment play in place-shaping?
- How important is heritage-led regeneration in both urban and rural contexts?
- What are the challenges in balancing increasing visitor numbers with preservation and conservation requirements? What role can digital technology play?
- How significant is the role of historical fiction and historically-infused television programmes in generating a public appetite for the past?
- To what extent has the rise of commercially viable histories eclipsed other, ‘less-sellable’ histories?

In addressing these themes, activities selected for this panel will move beyond adversarial positions and will look to build a constructive dialogue between academics in higher education and colleagues in other sectors.

Anniversaries and Commemorations

Our understanding of the past is shaped by historical anniversaries and commemoration. Notable anniversaries (centenaries and bicentenaries) provide topical moments to revisit historical events. This theme considers:

- Who decides what is worthy of commemoration and at what scale?



- What value is added by researching particular moments, events and people at particular times?
- Can historical anniversaries influence the understanding of the past for both academics and the public?

We invite contributions that explore past, present and future anniversaries, and particularly welcome proposals that consider the role of technology and digital media in their changing character and legacy.

Environmental Histories and Sustainable Legacies

Understanding attitudes towards natural resources, systems and landscapes and their associated cultural value represents an important research imperative. Arts and Humanities researchers are well placed to explore how attitudes and values towards the natural environment develop and how they change and have changed over time. We welcome proposals which address:

- How arts and humanities approaches can be applied to the examination of natural flows, for instance the impact of climate change, sea level rise and pollution levels?
- What can studies of the exploitation of natural resources and attempts at management and regulation reveal about environmental degradation, depletion and sustainability;
- What emerging methodologies can be brought to bear in understanding how past interaction with environments has influenced decision making?
- How might arts and humanities research into changing human- environment relationships influence future environmental policy making and how can studies of environmental policies over time inform current policy making?

Instrumentalising the Past

This session explores the role played by diverse agents (states, judiciary, policy-makers, social groups, professional corporations, non-governmental organizations, persons, etc.) in constructing the past, how and in what ways conceptualisations of the past shape future policy and how should judgments of the past shape present day policy. The challenge of instrumentalising the past raises a number of sub-themes, which proposals may wish to consider:

- What are the ethics in judging the past and how is the past judged in law and politics?
- How is the past instrumentalised through education?
- What is the appropriate role of official apologies for historical wrongs?
- How can academics connect with policy-makers who may be sceptical about the value of historical case studies?
- What role should humanities scholars play in public debates about policy?
- What role should digital media play in public debates about the past?

In addressing these topics, researchers are invited to focus upon the complex and non-linear relations between past, present and future. Papers/activities should draw out the challenge of instrumentalising the past in present-day policy by various agents, particularly amidst conflicts concerning the construction of historical narrative.



Information about the AHRC Care for the Future theme

Care for the Future: Thinking Forward through the Past affords an opportunity for researchers in the arts and humanities to generate new novel understandings of the relationship between the past and the future, and the challenges and opportunities of the present through a temporally-inflected lens. Importantly, it offers academic researchers in these fields the opportunity to facilitate and activate collaborations with partners including those outside higher education institutions in the cultural and creative sectors both in the UK and internationally.

Core elements of the Care for the Future theme include explorations of the values and beliefs of individuals, communities, and institutions; questions around what is meaningful about continuity and change; and the role that narratives, experiences, visualisations, performances, and stories have to play in these processes. The theme is organised around five strands: questions of temporality and history; inter- and cross-generational communication, justice and exchange; trauma, conflict and memory; environmental change and sustainability; and cultural notions of the future. Technological development, alternative lifestyle movements, and the nature of ideological and philosophical, ethical and creative, historicised and imagined perspectives jostle for attention and require a diversity of approaches and disciplinary engagements for the theme to reach its full potential. The relationship between heritage and history is also a major concern of the Theme, as are newly-emerging Heritages in the present, and the Heritage of the future.

The theme encompasses questions around what is meaningful about continuity and change. The potential sites of engagement not only overlap and intersect: they are designed to stimulate researchers to come forward with their own perspectives and priorities for investigation. Work that places these elements into international and comparative cultural contexts is particularly welcomed, alongside projects working in partnership with non-HEIs in the co-production of new knowledge and ideas.

Further information on the scheme and a list of current awards can be found on the Care for the Future theme website: <http://careforthefuture.exeter.ac.uk/>

Information about the Labex Pasts in the Present programme

The Cluster of Excellence LABEX (Laboratoire d'Excellence), **Pasts in the Present: History, Heritage, Memory** is concerned with the presence of the past in contemporary society and involves a number of academic and heritage institutions in France. The laboratory of excellence seeks to tease out the linkages between history, heritage, and memory and understand mediations of history in the digital age, politics of memory, social appropriations of the past up- and downstream from heritage policies. The reflection is interdisciplinary and organised in two fundamental themes: "Connections to the past: representations and assessments," which seeks a global analysis of representations of the past; and "Active knowledge of the past: tools and practices of transmission," seeks to make new digitized collections relating to ancient, medieval, and contemporary history publicly available for different audiences. The LABEX Pasts in the Present has also developed a dynamic network of programs, based on heritage, culture and text, history, sociology of memory and art history. Launched in 2011, it is supported by French National Research Agency (CNRS) and based at University Paris Ouest Nanterre la Défense.

The cluster of excellence Pasts in the Present puts the early career researchers at the core of its functioning. Many ECRs under contract take part in the cluster, in addition to the winners of doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships.