

## CHAPTER 8: TRANSLATION ACROSS BORDERS: CONNECTING THE ACADEMIC AND POLICY COMMUNITIES

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### Abstract

In this chapter we look at the legacy of three projects which connected the research and policy communities, through the development of ‘policy briefs’ for the UK Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). These were to be short and accessible reviews of research – in particular from the arts and humanities - relevant to policy on localism. Starting from an understanding of policy-making as meaning-making, and of translation as situated and purposeful action, we explored through ethnographic and action research how academics and government analysts translate research into ideas useful for policy makers.

We conclude that the legacy of researching for policy can be understood not just in terms of ‘things left behind’ and their direct impact on policy, but also more broadly in terms of the purposes of all those involved being met, and influences on academic and civil service norms and subsequent practice. Co-production is central to leaving such a legacy, in particular to break down mutual misunderstanding across the policy/academia border and to enable research to be used. In contrast interdisciplinarity seems less important, though broadening the disciplinary base of research used by government is certainly valuable. Underpinning everything else, the development of relationships of trust through collaboration and mutual learning is paramount.

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we look at the legacy of a set of *Connected Communities* projects which made connections between the ‘research community’ of academics and the ‘policy community’ of civil servants. They had the potential to leave behind something which might have significant effects at a national scale – ‘impact’ in the current policy jargon. We make a distinction here between ‘legacy’ in a very broad, everyday sense of ‘anything handed down by ... a predecessor’ (OED, online edition) and ‘impact’ with its specific policy meaning of ‘an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia’ (HEFCE 2015). Colloquially, the ‘impact agenda’ refers to the increasingly insistent pressures on the academy to achieve demonstrable impact; in this sense it is an external pressure which may reinforce or conflict with academics’ own commitments to achieving social change through their research.

The three interdisciplinary projects created ‘policy briefs’ for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the UK government department responsible for localism, local government, housing, planning and related functions in England. As a central government policy making body, DCLG is continually in search of robust, research-based evidence to support its work. The policy briefs were to be short and accessible reviews of research relevant to policy on localism. In particular they were intended to identify novel insights from the arts and humanities in order to broaden the range of ideas available to policy makers.

### Projects in focus in this chapter

The legacy being explored here is that of three *Connected Communities* projects, commissioned to create ‘policy briefs’ to inform policy making in the Department of Communities and Local

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Government. Each had a specific topic, identified in consultation with policy-makers at DCLG, addressing *local representation*, *co-production of local services*, and *accountability in the context of decentralisation and fiscal austerity*. We refer to these in this chapter as ‘the representation brief’, ‘the co-production brief and ‘the accountability brief’.

The principal written outputs were Connelly *et al.* 2013 (representation), Durose *et al.* 2013 (co-production), and Richardson and Durose 2013 (accountability). The latter two project teams overlapped in membership, while the representation brief project was entirely separate.

The project through which this legacy was explored was called *Translation across Borders*.

An immediate, though unforeseen, legacy was the *Translation across Borders* project, on which this chapter is based. Intrigued by the fate of the policy briefs and curious to explore whether these very different projects had left any legacy within DCLG, members of the research teams came together with civil servants who had been the ‘audience’ for the briefs, and co-produced a new project. Starting with a narrow focus on the direct legacies of the policy briefs, it swiftly developed into a broader investigation of what happens at and on either side of the knowledge creation/policy border. It involved an action research element, to test ways of overcoming the long-acknowledged frustrations of both academics and policy makers over the utility of academic research (see, for example, Weiss 1975).

In the legacy project we used a humanities-inspired conception of ‘translation’ as a way into the complexities of academic and policy practice. Although widely used as a metaphor, a return to the disciplinary roots enabled us to see the border as the site of active, strategic work being done by academics and civil servants to reformulate research ‘texts’ and move ideas into policymaking. Engagement with the discipline of Translation Studies prompted us to pay attention to the *practices* of translators, to the normative *contexts* in which they work, and to the *material* aspects of their communication across borders. It also encouraged a symmetrical approach, looking at practices on both sides of the border, paying attention to perspectives from the domains of the ‘producers’ as well as ‘consumers’ of academic knowledge.

### **Key resources for thinking about legacy**

Our thinking about legacy in terms of how academic research must be ‘translated’ in order to have influence within government policy was informed by two distinct disciplines. Firstly, conceptualising policy making as essentially a meaning-making process is at the core of *Interpretive Policy Analysis*. Key resources here are:

Hajer, M. and H. Wagenaar (eds.) (2003) *Deliberative Policy Analysis: understanding governance in the network society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

and

Yanow, D. (2000) *Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis* New York: SAGE.

Secondly, a wide range of *Translation Studies* scholarship informed our approach, in particular Schaffner’s work on translation as purposeful action. Her work and others’ can be accessed through

Munday, J. (2012) *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, London: Routledge

and

Baker, M. and G. Saldanha, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, London & New York: Routledge.

At the intersection of these disciplines, the idea of translation as a fruitful metaphor in policy studies has been explored well in Freeman's review, and as a new theory of policy making by Clarke *et al.*:

Clarke, J., D. Bainton, N. Lendvai and P. Stubbs (2015) *Making Policy Move: towards a politics of translation and assemblage*, Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

Freeman, R. (2009) 'What is 'translation'?' *Evidence & Policy* 5(4): 429-447.

In the next section we set out our approach to the key concepts of legacy and translation. We then use our experience from *Translation across Borders* to describe the legacies of the three policy brief projects; suggest how different approaches to co-production and interdisciplinarity affected their influence on the policy audience; and identify the broader legacies which set the stage for *TaB*. We conclude that close collaboration in translating academic research both enhances its impact and is potentially self-reinforcing: as when academics work with other kinds of communities, significant legacies of co-production with policy communities are trusting relationships and changed values and practices, the effects of which may reach back from the borderland deep into both the civil service and the academy.

#### APPROACHING LEGACY: FROM 'IMPACT' TO 'TRANSLATION'

From the outset the 'impact agenda' – the pressure to ensure knowledge and research developed within university settings has a clear impact on policy and practice - influenced all the projects. The policy briefs were explicitly intended to create impact by introducing new ideas into the policy-making process. *Translation across Borders* aimed at a different, broader kind of impact: through investigating the legacy of the briefs, its purpose was to increase the usefulness and impact of arts and humanities research within policy making. Thus as Facer and Pahl point out in this book's Introduction, evaluating the policy briefs' legacy became a site of 'collaborative and generative research'.

This investigation was based on our conviction that policy making should be seen as an intrinsically interpretive activity (Yanow 2000). We are therefore concerned with how meanings move between people, places and policy fields, and are transformed and recreated as they move. The notion of 'translation' is therefore central. While the concept is increasingly mobilised in policy studies (Freeman 2009) this is principally as a metaphor in reconceptualisations of policy making itself (see, for example, Clarke *et al.* 2015). Our interest is rather in *the movement of meaning* (embedded in data, evidence, ideas, arguments and so on (Weiss 1991)), across the borders between academic and policy domains which are widely recognised as having their own cultures and languages. This concern with meaning crossing borders suggested that taking 'translation' rather literally might be a fruitful approach for understanding what happens to academic research as it passes from academia into policy, and through this explaining its observed lack of influence.

Translation Studies, like all disciplines, is a heterogeneous, dynamic, complex and contested field. We abstracted from it a few key ideas for our current purpose. Fundamental is conceptualising translating as a *socio-cultural act* (Munday 2012), and thus as:

- *purposeful* action oriented to achieving strategic as well as communicative *functions* – and so shifting attention away from the translated texts to the active translator (Reiss 1977/1989; Nord 1997; Schaffner 1997);
- *situated* action, taking place in contexts structured by *norms* which are both about translation itself (e.g. what is 'good' and 'bad') (Freeman 2009) and which constitute the broader

institutions of economic sanctions and rewards and status within which translators work (Lefevre 1992);

- *communicative* action, which therefore always comprises three *dimensions* beyond its cognitive content: its design; the substance which bears the content; and the processes through which it is produced and distributed (Kress 2010).

These three aspects point to different aspects of possible ‘legacy’: translating academic research may achieve particular *functions* and influence the *normative context*, and such achievement will in part depend on – and in turn shape - choices made across the different *communicative dimensions*.

## STUDYING LEGACY

The focus on interpretation and practices led us to using a mix of qualitative and ethnographic research methods. We interviewed eleven civil servants in analyst and policy teams within DCLG, and most of the academics who were involved in the three policy briefs (eleven in all, including four of this chapter’s authors). Vanderhoven spent three separate weeks based in DCLG observing and interviewing, and we ran four workshops: one solely with civil servants, two with academics and the project teams, and one with a mixed academic/civil servant group. We also introduced elements of action research, like Keleman *et al.* (this volume) being inspired by the pragmatist principle that to understand action in a complex environment required actively prompting change – mere reporting of practices would be insufficient. So an important part of the project became the iterative development of a range of ‘tools’ in collaboration with professional artists, to catalyse diagnosis and challenges to barriers to translation. Like many ‘legacy’ researchers, we also had performative intentions: to create as well as investigate legacy. This partly stemmed from a shared normative agenda to effect change, but was also a pragmatic necessity: the civil servants’ condition for cooperation was that the research should test ways of overcoming the barriers and not merely lead to better understanding.

Close collaboration at each stage was also absolutely essential. Academics needed access to civil servants over an extended period and in work settings, which would have been impossible without their support and ongoing involvement in project design and management. Further, we wanted to challenge the academic bias of most research in this field (Oliver *et al.* 2014) and probe the context for translation on both sides of the border. Rutherford – a social research analyst working on localism in DCLG and the civil service member of the project team – interviewed academics, co-designed and co-facilitated workshops and was continuously involved in project design and analysis. This level of co-production was enabled by pre-existing trust, in itself a legacy of contacts between the academic researchers and DCLG largely predating the policy brief projects.

Superficially the legacy project’s team was not particularly interdisciplinary, all self-identifying as social scientists and based in university departments and the central government ministry whose disciplinary affiliations would naturally be public administration, housing and planning. Closer examination, though, reveals a wider range of disciplinary backgrounds, including philosophy, history and social anthropology, and varied experience in community development and action research, as well as in qualitative and quantitative research. Ultimately the project team’s interdisciplinarity appeared to have little relevance, however. What wove us together was the shared desire to improve academics’ and civil servants’ understandings and practices: this common normative position was the precondition for the collaboration which enabled innovative analysis.

## THE ‘POLICY BRIEF’ PROJECTS AND THEIR LEGACIES

Here we set out *Translation across Border's* findings: an outline of the legacies of the *Connected Communities* policy briefs drawn up for the Department for Communities and Local Government. We look first at the obvious legacies they left behind, and consider how co-production and interdisciplinarity affected these. We then turn to a richer understanding of their legacy as the effects of 'translational action' (Schaffner, 1997) in terms of functions fulfilled and influence on norms, and the relationships of these to the dimensions of communication.

### The three policy brief projects: co-produced and interdisciplinary?

As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the whole point of the policy briefs was to introduce new ideas into the policy-making process, and in particular draw on arts and humanities thinking which might be less familiar to civil servants than ideas from social science. The remit was broad, with a focus on helping DCLG reconceptualise issues, rather than provide solutions to immediate policy problems. Alongside interdisciplinarity in approach and team membership, an element of co-production with (unspecified) communities was also required (as with all *Connected Communities* projects).

All three projects worked with a range of external partners to explore their topics, and so to co-produce the understandings which then fed into the policy briefs. In particular, all strove to represent to central government some of the ground-level experiences of citizen activists, voluntary sector organisations, and officers and politicians in local government. Although none involved DCLG as 'co-researchers' (Martin 2010), Durose and Richardson worked more closely with the civil servants to produce something that spoke more directly to policy questions in the accountability and co-production briefs (Durose et al. 2013, Richardson and Durose 2013). In contrast, guided by a desire to avoid too instrumental a use of arts and humanities in the representation brief, the Sheffield team stayed away from DCLG, apart from at the mandated project presentations; contact was otherwise limited to sending project outputs, with little or no dialogue or attempt at interpretation.

Across their respective topics the teams rose to the challenge of being innovative, for example bringing new ideas from Ostrom (1993; 1996) on co-production; a reworking of Arnstein's familiar "ladder of citizen participation" (Arnstein 1969) to address accountability; and insights from Hall (1997) and Kress (2010) to expand conceptualisations of 'representation' beyond the political. Underpinning these was a common normative theme: not only did the academics wish to see changed understandings, but they shared a substantive goal of a more participatory local governance. Aiming for this involved surprising the civil servants and challenging their preconceptions, for which different strategies were chosen. Reflecting their positive approach to co-production with DCLG, Durose and Richardson tried to work as 'critical friends'; in contrast the Sheffield team gave much less thought to the immediate users and uses of the representation brief, focusing instead on 'disrupting' accepted and traditional perspectives in order to effect change.

These common aims and strategic differences were manifested in the wide range of different project outputs and the ways they were communicated. Even though the DCLG project lead had requested reports in a standard '1:4:20' format (i.e. a one page summary, a four page summary, and no more than 20 pages of detail) the outputs were immensely varied, as the academics deliberately translated the 'findings' from their desk and field studies into different forms in order to maximise their effectiveness.

The 1:4:20 format was ignored. The principal output from the co-production brief project (Durose et al. 2013) consists of a 'slide pack' of thirty-nine PowerPoint slides, deliberately modelled on a format used in DCLG's internal communications and which the authors were informed was gaining in



popularity. The slides are useful at different levels: from their complete content, through the core messages communicated by viewing only the slides' titles, to individual slides which can be extracted and used for different purposes. The most conventional output from the accountability brief project was a '7:56' format report (Richardson and Durose 2013) comprising text, bullet points in the summary, and tables which translated academic 'grand theory' into descriptions of how decentralised governance models were experienced in practice. Rather different from these more obviously 'policy-friendly formats', the team also produced a series of non-traditional outputs, including an interactive self-assessment 'quiz' for local practitioners, which they took care to introduce to DCLG. In contrast the representation brief team's outputs mixed the stereotypically academic with consciously innovative artistic formats, but without the same attention to communicating their intent. Connelly *et al.* (2013) is 33 pages of relatively academic language with no summary. DCLG were also sent a DVD comprising videos of various acts of representation, including a shadow puppet performance to convey young people's concerns in a city in northern England, without additional interpretation or explanation. An interim report and associated presentation opened with a poetic exhortation to 'tell all the truth but tell it slant' (Dickinson 1998).

Different trade-offs were being made here. The representation brief team paid less explicit heed to the impact agenda, and so to direct policy relevance, and prioritised academic, and especially artistic, freedom. This was not necessarily a loss: it seems plausible that if they had worked more closely with DCLG they would have been less able to develop innovative ideas. However, in terms of leaving a legacy within DCLG, content which was deliberately unsettling was inevitably going to be hard to communicate. Where Durose and Richardson skilfully used design and communication strategy to get their message across, the representation brief team strove to destabilise expectations about these as well as about content, and consequently failed to have any significant effect. As a senior analyst in DCLG put it, "poems I'm not sure about... it comes down to getting across really clear, really simple messages".

### Legacies as changes in knowledge

Given this difference in approach to their main audience, it is not surprising that only the accountability and co-production briefs left a visible legacy, in any straightforward sense of the transfer of their 'findings' to DCLG. But for all the innovation and richness of the projects there was rather little to be seen. Our (perhaps naïve) expectation was that through the legacy project we would be able to trace within DCLG at least the core ideas from the briefs, and possibly even the material forms in which they were carried as they were reworked through a series of translations. However, while we know that individual tables and slides from the accountability and co-production outputs (Richardson and Durose, 2013 and Durose *et al.* 2013) have been reproduced and used within DCLG, and promoted outside DCLG by civil servants, distinguishing and following the trace further at national government level was more difficult than expected.

Less naïvely, this should not be a surprise, given that we know from Owens (2005) and others (Smith 2014) that linear 'research impact' is unusual. So we need to look to the broader legacy of the projects, and consider what translation might leave behind as well as 'translated texts'. As noted above the translation studies discipline points towards seeing these in terms of achieved purposes and functions, changed practices (in particular communication modes), and changes in the norms which provide the context for translation.

First though, we note some of the complexities inherent in the production of translated texts. When texts are produced by academics for government audiences – without co-production - their translations of their own findings are almost necessarily based in incomplete understanding of the dynamism and complexity of the civil service world. The usefulness of a research communication is

conditional not just on its form, but also on the timeliness and relevance and acceptability of its message. Academics are therefore usually second-guessing, and as one told us

*our second-guesses about what we thought you [the DCLG analysts] thought that they [the DCLG policy teams] needed were a long way from the reality.*

However, the representation and use of academics' research-derived knowledge is rarely confined to single 'texts'. So as well as the explicit outputs we can see the ideas developed within the policy briefs being internalised by the researchers, and then reintroduced into the policy-making process over time and in different places. In particular, driven by their concern with localism, Durose and Richardson have introduced their ideas directly to local practitioners to substantial effect<sup>1</sup>.

On the civil service side we see a complexity which contributes to the lack of apparent use of research. If the analysts – whose official job description is to provide policy teams with 'the best research evidence and thinking from the social sciences' (Civil Service undated) – can access the ideas in incoming academic material these are not particularly likely to be used in immediate, or recognisable ways. The key judgement is always whether research is useful. If so, it will be used selectively, often merged with material from other research, and deployed across different time scales: some ideas may be used immediately and others 'banked' for later, depending on political and policy rhythms and trends. In doing this work the analysts are – and see themselves as – translators, producing useful, accessible and acceptable materials for 'their' policy teams from academic source texts.

In the conclusions we return to the implications of the above for co-production. Here we turn to legacies beyond the translated texts, starting with the functions fulfilled by the briefs.

Their primary ostensible function was met, as DCLG seemed pleased with the outputs and the new ideas they contained. There may well be symbolic and practical aspects to this: whatever the utility of the content, it was useful for both DCLG and AHRC to demonstrate engagement over policy research. That the Richardson and Durose teams' ideas about neighbourhood accountability, co-production and peer learning are being used is evidence of fairly direct cognitive effects, which fulfils the academics' personal objectives. More diffuse and long-term conceptual change is impossible to assess.

The projects served other functions for the academic researchers. The theorising which took place has contributed to individuals' personal intellectual projects, now being manifested in peer-reviewed, academic outputs only tangentially related to the policy briefs themselves. In this of course, they also address the academics' need to publish: as with non-academic impact the scholarly and instrumental goals are intertwined.

### Legacies as changed relationships

Many of the academics shared a strategic goal of developing and maintaining links with DCLG. This was also true of the organisations – the overall project was developed through consultation between DCLG and AHRC, and reflect the desire of both to create stronger links between researchers and policy, going beyond the limits of the three brief projects themselves. During the projects this contributed both to a sense of competition between the teams, and to tensions within some teams

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<sup>1</sup> The multiple sites at which 'policy' is made and knowledge potentially used introduces further complexity. While the impact of the policy briefs at local level is clearly important, in this chapter – as in the project – we are concerned with academics' influence on the central government policy makers responsible for localism.

over the relative importance of satisfying the civil servants. Finally, though, relationships *were* strengthened and are part of the legacy in both academic and civil service domains.

A concrete aspect of this was the rapid development of the legacy project (*Translation across Borders*) which brought together members of all the policy brief teams and the DCLG analyst closest to them in a project that was more co-produced and collaborative than the initial projects. Indeed, we identified co-production in the legacy project as a solution to the problems of translation we experienced in the first three policy briefs projects. In this way, it was more successful than the briefs in influencing policy and academic practice, reflecting the insights reached through much closer co-production. The ties developed through the briefs and *Translation across Borders* have also led to other opportunities for research to affect policy, with Durose's and Richardson's appointment as pro bono advisors to DCLG's Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods initiative, influence from Pahl's *Connected Communities* research (via an ESRC-funded seminar series) into the design of DCLG's Women's Empowerment Fund), as well as the extension of *the legacy project* into a programme to enhance *Connected Communities'* overall policy impact. Reinforcing Matthews *et al.*'s findings from the *Valuing Different Perspectives* project (this volume), the general point here is that the relationships between researchers and communities, and between projects and other community activity, make attempts to associate legacy with specific projects quite problematic. Effects emerge from complex and always evolving webs of activity.

These effects included changes in communicative practices between academics and civil servants – in particular their mutual willingness to engage in open dialogue – which are attributable in part to the policy brief projects. These were manifested in the very different approach taken in the legacy project. The academics – particularly the representation brief team – had learned through experience how difficult it was to achieve visible policy 'impact', and the importance of co-production. That they needed this lesson (given that they already 'knew' these things in theory) shows the striking dominance of the linear research impact model embedded in the policy brief call, and of the surrounding norms about possible relationships between academy and civil service. Reflection on this was one factor which created, or perhaps revealed, a willingness to act differently in order to be more effective. Crucially, though, this also rested on the development of familiarity and trust: in particular the civil servants' confidence that academic researchers would not act in ways which risked compromising the former's professional commitment to political neutrality.

These changes are manifested in the cooperation of civil servants in the design and implementation of the legacy project. Such co-production in design and analysis, the presence of an embedded researcher within DCLG, and the action research approach (let alone a civil servant interviewing academics!) is unusual in central government. Another salient change is in the shared interest – amongst civil servants and social scientists alike – in employing professional artists in creating 'tools' such as caricatures of stereotypical academics and a set of cards for diagnosing communication problems. It can also be seen in the continuous reflective engagement between academics and civil servants in meetings, informal conversations, shared meals, reflective blogs and so on. All of these were unthinkable prior to the policy briefs.

Predictably, though, the projects' impact on the 'hard' structures (such as staff performance measures or work load allocations) of civil service or universities was unobservable and probably nil. Even though the innovative content of the briefs has institutional implications for how DCLG interacts with local communities, the project process provided few opportunities to promote institutional change, as opposed to encouraging learning. Again in contrast, the legacy project's co-productive approach has led to discussion and experiments about institutional change, at the borders if not in the core structures.



While co-production is clearly essential to achieve such institutional changes, interdisciplinarity's role seems less important. The contributing factors here are assumptions and attitudes and practices, rather than the substantive content of the research where interdisciplinarity might be more significant. The role of the artists in *Translation across Borders* is the outstanding exception, however. Learning the hard way that academic reports, on their own, are often not a useful means of communicating with government analysts, combined with our insights about the need for changing practices, left us at a loss, given our core communicative skills as academics. We therefore turned to community-oriented artists with the skills of using design and performance to engage and communicate and evoke change. At the time of writing – with all the project field work completed – this leaves a major question unanswered: how can and should we communicate such a project's findings? A report seems self-contradictory, and yet expected by the civil service – the internal innovative logic of the project clashes here with entrenched norms of research communication.

## CO-PRODUCING POLICY-RELEVANT RESEARCH – SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

To recap: the policy brief projects left behind a range of material legacies, in the form of reports in a range of styles, a DVD, an interactive governance quiz and so on, through which the academic teams attempted to convey their translations of their research to the DCLG civil servants working on localism. More than that, they embodied new ideas which the academics hoped would change ways of thinking within DCLG, and were the product of processes intended to lead to further engagement across the academic/policy border. As detailed above, in these aims they were varyingly successful; perhaps most in developing and strengthening relationships which led on to other things, and in particular in changing expectations and norms around joint working which enabled the close collaboration on *Translation across Borders*.

Presented like that it seems straightforward, but we need to re-emphasise that these outcomes, and this analysis, are parts of continuing processes. They are impossible to completely disentangle – for example to attribute 'impact' - and need to be seen as developmental, iterative, and reflexive pragmatic engagements between researchers and the policy community, who are collaboratively producing new understandings and praxis. As a study of legacy, our project had both the virtues and the limitations of depth and focus, in looking at the activities of a small number of academics working with civil servants from a single directorate of a single government department. The details of the legacy and the processes are of course unique, and the norms which govern translation probably differ significantly between academic groups and across government. However, it seems likely that both the analysis and the kinds of processes we uncovered through using the lens of translation are more general in their relevance. In these concluding paragraphs we put forward some thoughts about the relevance of co-production and interdisciplinarity to the creation of policy-relevant knowledge as a final legacy both from the policy briefs and *Translation across Borders*.

A clear conclusion is – unsurprisingly – the value of co-production, in particular as a route to fostering mutual understanding across the academic/civil service border. One striking finding from *Translation across Borders* was the extent of mutual ignorance and reciprocal stereotyping, which is at least part of the story of why academic knowledge has less purchase than it might in the policy world. With relatively few exceptions, academics and civil servants have little experience or understanding of the complexity and pressures to the others' world, and consequently work with often inaccurate assumptions about how and why people behave as they do. So as individuals we variously found ourselves surprised by such things as the enormous importance to some academics of the impact agenda (as manifested in the UK government's Research Excellence Framework<sup>2</sup>), by

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk) for detail.

academics' overtly expressed politics, by the rapidity of staff transfer and promotions within the civil service, and by the arts and humanities backgrounds of many civil servants. Even brief exposure started to change these assumptions, yet for many academics working in isolation from the policy world this is not easy to achieve. Yet the chances of producing the 'right' knowledge, and translating it into a meaningful form at a useful time, are extremely small without some detailed knowledge of a policy field and its inhabitants. This is particularly so given the extremely variable nature of the policy environment - variable in terms of acceptable forms of knowledge and communication, functions to be met, as well as appetite for academic research – between ministries, policy fields, individual civil servants, and over time. Within *Translation across Borders* we showed how co-production, in the strong sense of co-designing and co-implementing research, addressed this need for understanding in two interconnected ways. Cognitively it did increase mutual knowledge of the other domain, though arguably no outsider can ever fully grasp the dynamism and complexity of either the academy or the civil service. But perhaps more important is the affective and relational impact of co-production – the building of knowledge of 'the others' as people and the creation of mutual trust.

While it seemed that co-production was crucial for effective research for government, interdisciplinarity was not. The latter was imposed on the projects on the grounds that it leads to useful innovation. While the academics involved were largely motivated by the possibility of achieving change through introducing new ideas to policy makers, academic interdisciplinarity did not seem central and relevant to this. It was a secondary, pragmatic (and not always welcome) condition which had to be met in order to pursue the common intellectual and political agenda of promoting more participative ways of working with communities. Interdisciplinarity in conceptual terms was important, but at a larger scale. Academics and civil servants shared the goal of introducing new ideas in order to broaden DCLG's disciplinary horizons, in particular to be more receptive to ideas from the arts and humanities – but broadening the range of ideas drawn on by the civil service does not entail that any individual project needs to be interdisciplinary. However, ideas are not the only ingredient within a project, and our experience researching legacy points to the value for co-production of a mix of *skills* and *approaches to communication* - in particular in art and design - which go beyond those stereotypically held by social scientists. Finally, interpersonal skills are vital, and these are clearly not tied to disciplinary affiliation.

This last point seems very generally relevant, and so brings us to the legacy of the policy briefs, as investigated by *Translation across Borders*, for any projects working towards co-production research with policy makers. Recognising the importance of translation seems crucial, and so also considering who acts as translators. Academics are not necessarily alone in translating their work for policy makers – for instance in the UK the existence of the analytical professions (primarily social researchers, economists and statisticians) within the civil service is crucial, and apparently little known in academia. Given their official role as evidence providers *within* government such people are often receptive to knowledge produced by academics and may be keen to develop trusting relationships with researchers. For this translation to be possible, however, research must have visible use, or at least potential use, and so needs to be accessible - if its meaning is so obscure that it cannot be 'translated' by an analyst then it will not enter the system. So all involved, but particularly perhaps academic researchers, need to attend to the communicative aspects of their work. This means paying attention not just to content but also design and materiality, and how they communicate with each other across the academic/policy border - here we can see clear potential for more arts practice to enhance communication. Further, learning about each other's domain is vital, and so therefore is creating opportunities for learning. Here co-production potentially has a major role, but also other forms of engagement with an experiential element such as internships and work-shadowing.

Running through this chapter is the importance of dialogue and collaboration to co-produce translations of academic research, in order to increase mutual understanding and to develop trust and reshape norms of acceptable communicative practices. As with other social endeavours such approaches are risky and potentially conflictual, but also provide sites for resolution and progress unattainable without such engagement. Our experience is that for sustained legacy and impact the relational changes are paramount and emergent, as they arise from collaboration in unpredictable ways. When successful such relationships create a virtuous spiral, reinforcing and expanding the possibilities for further innovative working across the academic/policy border, and so for enhancing the legacy of research projects which aim to influence government policy.

### Guidance for understanding and creating legacy

The legacy of academics working with policy makers can be both the immediate impact of research and in changed *relationships* and *understanding* of policy makers and academics – paying attention to the latter should pay dividends in achieving the former.

Academic research has to be *translated* before it is useful to policy makers. Co-producing translations is a better approach than guessing at what the government might want.

Communicating with government means paying attention not just to content but also to the design and materiality and practice of communications. Arts practice can be important here, as long as it remains committed to enhancing communication.

Academics and policy makers work in very different, highly-pressured worlds. Unhelpful stereotypes abound, so co-production requires mutual learning, respect and empathy, and recognising the motivations, incentives and constraints imposed by the contexts in which people work.

Creating relationships based on dialogue and trust lies at the heart of successful co-production; these take time and care to develop and nurture.

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