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Translation across borders: Exploring the use, relevance and impact of academic research in the policy process

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Introduction

Complex social and governance problems have engaged academic researchers ever since the closely-linked emergence of public welfare policy and associated academic disciplines in the post-World War II era (Lindblom and Cohen 1979; Fischer 2003). In the UK's recent past, governments' demand for research rose as both New Labour and then the post-2010 Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition sought to portray their policies as being based on objective analysis, rather than ideology (Nutley *et al.* 2007; HMG 2013). In parallel, pressure rose on academia to demonstrate the utility of its research, constructed as having 'demonstrable economic and social impacts' (HEFCE 2009: 7) and requiring the planning of 'pathways to impact' (RCUK 2011). The 2007 economic crisis, and ensuing public sector austerity measures, further increased the pressure on academia to justify its cost to the public purse through its contribution to solving society's problems. As discussed in the Introduction and Obrien and Matthews (this volume), this prompted new relationships between academics and policy makers, as programmes such as *Connected Communities* were devised with government priorities in mind, and cuts in government research budgets reinforced other trends promoting the coproduction of policy-relevant knowledge.

This chapter draws on four *Connected Communities* (CC) projects: three which produced 'policy briefings' (Connelly *et al.* 2013; Durose *et al.* 2013; Richardson and Durose 2013) for the Department for Communities and Local Government[1] (DCLG) and the *Translation Across Borders* 'legacy' project (2014-15). All reflected DCLG's desire for new knowledge to guide post-regeneration policy development and delivery. The move away from area-based initiatives towards decentralisation of budgeting and planning, as part of a fundamental rescaling and reimagining of the relationships between citizens and the central and local state, has heightened the importance of grappling with some very old 'political theory' problems of how to understand and reinforce accountability and representation. This has provided fertile ground for new relationships with the academy, as some researchers – ourselves included – have stepped into this arena, aiming not only to help solve problems but also to shape agendas by influencing how key issues are understood.

However, the emphasis on evidence-based policy and impact has brought to the fore longstanding mutual frustrations over academics' perceived inability to produce usable outputs, and policy makers' perceived inability to use academic research in appropriate and responsible ways (Lindblom and Cohen 1979; Owens 2005; Smith and Joyce 2012). While diagnoses of the roots of these problems differ, most emphasise the differences between academic and policy worlds – their individual and organisational interests, cultures and 'languages' (Orr and Bennett 2012). Perhaps because the policy world is seen as the more resistant to change, and because the pressures to engage effectively bear harder on academics (since policy makers have

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[1] The central government department principally responsible for localism, local and community governance, planning and urban regeneration in England.

potential sources of evidence other than the universities) the cures tend to be prescribed to academics. They may involve learning more about the policy world and its needs and 'rhythms' (Stoker 2013) and to learn its language better - to 'speak in human' (Flinders 2012). Even more strongly, though, academics are encouraged to work with the 'users' of research, on the assumption that coproduction will overcome the barriers between the worlds and produce robust yet useful knowledge. In practice, these are not straightforward prescriptions, nor are they necessarily successful (Walker 2010; Orr and Bennett 2012).

In this chapter we contribute to a growing literature which problematises straightforward analyses and prescriptions, and builds on a long tradition which recognises the complexity of the policy world. However, our approach is symmetrical, in that we pay equal attention to the complexity of the academic world. Our focus is on the practices by which research 'findings' are taken up and used within and by government. In common with others in this field (Lendvai and Stubbs 2007; Nutley *et al.* 2007; Freeman 2009), we find the notion of 'translation' fruitful.

We take 'translation' seriously: rather than using it as a loose metaphor, we draw on ideas from the concept's 'home' in the humanities, in particular translation studies, which illuminate the complexities of collective processes of (re)interpretation and meaning making. In particular theories of translatorial action (Schaffner 1998) emphasise the active and purposeful role of translators, emphasising their situated practices and institutional constraints (Sullivan 2011; Orr and Bennett 2012) which are our principal concern. Further, translation between 'communities' implies the presence of borders: translation takes place between the 'languages' of different groups. The nature of these borders – their effects on translation, their permeability and the extent to which they can be challenged and repositioned - are thus also important to our analysis.

The *Translation Across Borders* project was developed by academics and civil servants within DCLG to investigate how research is translated from the academy into the Department and out to neighbourhood projects. It focused on the production and subsequent fate of the three policy briefings prepared by the current authors (amongst others) for DCLG in 2012-13 on local representation, coproduction of services, and accountability in the context of decentralisation and fiscal austerity. We combined interviews, participant observation and interactive workshops with elements of action research to explore the influence of these projects on DCLG and how future research could be made more useful to the civil service. Our unusually symmetrical focus and practice – which involved civil servants interviewing academics – produced a rich understanding of the practice of translation as applied to the very varied project 'outputs', which included films, reports, 'slide packs' and a poem. The almost inevitable limitation of such an in-depth approach is narrowness of empirical scope, and the likelihood that relationships between academics and analysts elsewhere in the civil service may be very different. Nevertheless, while the nature of the relationships we uncovered may be very context-specific, it seems likely that both the analysis and the kinds of processes we uncovered are more general in their relevance.

In conclusion we neither deny the enduring reality of the borders between separate academic and civil service domains, and so the ongoing necessity for translation, nor accept that their impermeably and resistance preclude making research effective. We do not, however, conclude that coproduction *of knowledge* is the necessarily the solution, since this overemphasises the possibility of merging the domains. Rather we suggest that a focus on fostering collaborative translation under the aegis of a 'shared endeavour' is more productive, emphasising the different environments and practices involved and the work required in creating useful meaning.

Theorising translation

In this project we have adopted an 'interpretive' approach to understanding policy processes, 'based on philosophical presuppositions that put human meaning and social realities at their heart', recognising that 'all actors in a policy situation (as with other aspects of the social world), interpret issue data as they seek to make sense of the policy' (Yanow 2000: 5 & 6). This emphasis on subjectivity and meaning-making, and the resultant multiplicity of meanings in any setting, leads naturally to an interest to the processes of *translation* of meanings between people and groups, and so also to the ways translation is theorised in the humanities (Freeman 2009). In his overview of ways in which policy scholars make use of the concept Freeman draws attention to the negative literary connotations of translation being less than the 'original' – a sentiment which parallels that at the heart of academic worries over the need to translate academic research into policy 'prose'. Overall he concludes that linguistic and literary studies show that translation "is not merely change but conscious change" which involves work, choices and thus judgements by the translator. Furthermore,

> "translation emphasises the production of a new semantic object. Translation has a more active sense [than 'interpretation'] of re-writing, re-production" (Freeman 2009: 434-435).

We dissent from Freeman's valuable insights in two significant ways. The suggestion that translation involves creating *shared* meaning seems unnecessarily restrictive. Despite current pressures to 'coproduce', translation does not have to be collaborative, nor is it necessary for meaning to be agreed as translators *re*-write their texts.   Freeman's conclusion that 'translation' may be no more than a helpful 'boundary practice', because there *is* no 'translation itself' (Freeman 2009: 441) seems unnecessary. Rather, 'translation' captures the ideas of combined transfer-plus-creation and of something (perhaps 'meaning') crossing between bordered domains.

Here we use elements of translation studies' (TS) theorising to investigate this process. TS is a complex academic field in its own right, which has developed in recent decades from a historical focus on texts towards seeing translation as a socio-cultural act (Munday 2012), with striking parallels to the development of interpretive, political understandings of policy making. To organise our necessarily selective engagement with the discipline, we start from the practices of translation, and the role of the translator. Recognising their situated agency then leads to concern with the ways in which this is enabled and constrained by institutions at societal and organisational levels. Our interest in practices then draws our attention in the other direction, to the way translation is shaped by the nature of the 'stuff' through which meaning is generated and communicated.

Translation studies' early theoretical concerns were with what gets 'carried over' in translating a religious source text. Fidelity to the source was the central goal, but debate raged over whether this meant fidelity to the (sacred) language of the text or to its (sacred) meaning - the latter requiring more interpretation, creativity and sensitivity to the world of the audience on the part of the translator (Steiner 1998). (Analogues with academics' concerns are clear: in communicating findings to a non-academic audience how much has to be re-written in a new idiom and what is lost?) In the twentieth century the latter position was radically developed. Theories of translatorial action (TA) and *skopos* (i.e. function) theory emphasised the primacy of function over fidelity: a good translation is one which is functionally appropriate and adequate (Schaffner 1997). This privileges the audience over the author, pointing to 'usefulness' as the primary criterion for quality (cf. Lövbrand 2011). Unsurprisingly these departures from traditional conceptions of translation prompted much (unresolved) debate, as they imply the down-playing (even abandonment) of fidelity to the source and potentially unconstrained freedom for the translator to reinterpret the original in the quest for relevance. These theories also draw attention to way translations are likely to simultaneously

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communicate content *and* perform a range of other communicative and strategic functions, and that the latter may be the more important (Reiss 1977/1989; Schaffner 1998).   The possibilities for miscommunication and conflict are obvious: for instance it is reasonable, perhaps, to assume that 'the academy' would privilege fidelity to source, and policy makers usefulness, thus contributing to the frustration noted earlier.

These theories also emphasise the agency of the translator, in assessing what function(s) the translation has to fulfil and how best to do this, and thus who translates is important. Whether an academic is second-guessing their users' needs in translating their own findings, or a government policy analyst is translating an academic paper for a minister clearly affects what takes place, as translators always act in a social and institutional setting.

Freeman also draws our attention to the branch of TS concerned with power and 'manipulation' (Hermans 1985) and in particular to concerns with "what norms are at work in selecting any given text … for translation, and translating it in a certain way" (Freeman 2009: 433). For translators, Toury took these norms to be

> 'the translation of general values or ideas shared by a group—as to what is conventionally right and wrong, adequate and inadequate—into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations' (Toury 1995: 55)

and differentiates between formal rules, sanctions, less stringent norms and conventions, and 'idiosyncrasies'.   Some concern specifically the nature of translation, whereas others are broader, originating in and policed by the elite who control systems of ideology, economic sanctions and rewards and status (Lefevere 1992; Chesterman 1997).

Usefulness is not the only important criteria for acceptability from a user's perspective: there are also criteria associated with the nature of the translation as a 'thing' in itself. Here we depart from translation studies per se, as its principal focus on translating texts between languages is too constraining, and use Kress's theorising of communication in general. Whereas both policy and translation studies tend to privilege the cognitive content of a 'text', Kress (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; Kress 2010) shows that a communication always involves three further dimensions - design, the substance which bears the content, and the processes through which it is produced and distributed. For instance, Flinders' 'speaking in human' is a case where a single dimension - design in choice of language – is invoked as key to success. In other cases design, materiality and practice all play a role: consider the differing likelihoods of successful communication between sending a dense statistical report to a civil servant and explaining its content, orally and with projected graphics in a seminar. This is not just about making communication 'easier', as personal, technical, institutional and social norms all affect a communication's acceptability, and these norms will vary between and within institutions such as academia and the civil service.

Finally, by adopting the lens of 'translation' we invoke the idea of borders between communities with different 'languages'. Much of the academic and policy literature on research transfer takes these borders as a given, but overstates the problems they create (Orr and Bennett 2012: 3-4). In contrast Smith and Joyce (2012) point to theories of networked policy making which show that much policy making spans boundaries rather easily. We suggest that this overstates the opposing case: there *are* 'real' normative and structural differences in people's organisational contexts, which mean that boundary crossing involves work, and often translation. However, while the expertise of 'boundary spanners' (Williams and Sullivan 2009) or those with boundary-crossing professional biographies (Lewis 2008; Milligan *et al.* 2011) has received attention, the everyday challenges of making meaning across boundaries are less well-explored.

Translation across borders

In this section we discuss preliminary findings of our interpretive investigation of these challenges through the *Translation Across Borders* project. At the time of writing (autumn 2014) we had completed interviews with civil servants in DCLG (by Vanderhoven) and with most of the academics in the policy briefing teams (carried out jointly by Matthews and a policy analyst from DCLG). Vanderhoven had also spent two separate weeks within DCLG, observing, interviewing and participating in routine work. The material in this section draws on this fieldwork, with quotes unattributed except where a role is specified to clarify meaning. We write of 'the academics' in the third person rather than the first, as the interviewees included colleagues involved in the policy briefings but who are not authors of this paper.

Two important points emerged from the outset. Firstly, there are many forms of researcher/civil servant engagement, from conventional research relationships to informal, unfunded advice and conversation. Secondly, *three* (not two) key domains are involved. Within the civil service important organisational and cultural distinctions exist between policy teams and the economic, statistical and social research 'analysts' whose primary functions are to provide "evidence for policy" and "ensure policy debate is informed by the best research evidence and thinking from the social sciences" (Civil Service undated). Many civil service analysts have professional biographies which have crossed the border from academia, and have a level of experience and intercultural competence (Byram 1997) less common in either the policy teams or the academy. In their role as intermediaries analysts *are* translators (Mulgan 2013). As one put it , in the context of a discussion about how to promote evidence to influence more 'principle based' positions:

> [the policy teams] need to get some pretty compelling evidence if they need to try and change [a] minister's mind. And so our role and academia's role I would say is in that translation. And if we both do that then it will have more impact."

The practicing translators

For the analysts the over-riding emphasis is on making research useful for the policy teams. Their expertise is crucial: to transform research-based texts they both have to make sense of them in their own terms ('what does the research say?') and know enough of the policy environment to judge what might be useful.

> Having an easily-accessible and then relatively easily-digestible evidence base to inform [our] thinking is valuable…Shaded by the need to kind of respond to the political realities. There is little point us putting up advice that says 'One of our best ideas… is to vastly increase taxation...'

Creating something which meets their audience's expectations may involve reworking a whole report, creating a single slide, providing a few lines in an email or a table of data. To an extent this is exactly about writing in human: one analyst said:

> What I probably find the most challenging is I have to strip back a lot of the narrative, the academic over-elaboration and floweriness of the language because that is important for the academic publications and the narrative across academia. But here it's seen as noise.

But what counts as acceptable communication changes: in 2014

> …there's a big demand for infographics, so I've got a [number] of people that work on producing infographics.

Research-based knowledge may be deployed immediately as 'evidence', but is also synthesised and banked by the analysts, whose expertise shapes their strategic use of knowledge in policy-making. Function does not entirely trump fidelity, however, as the research base has to be reliable. The policy team members trust

their analyst colleagues to judge this, and are thus able to take for granted some 'coherence' (Munday 2012: 122-123) with a robust empirical base, and focus on utility.

> People want to see the function, they don't want to see the wiring underneath it. They want to know that that product works. They don't want to understand all of the kind of minutiae behind it.

The academics' principal concern was with communicating a message – to introduce new ways of thinking which would change government action in line with their agendas. Their translations of their own research were thus 'operative' as well as 'communicative' (Reiss 1977/1989), and they were open about this, even though they were being interviewed by a DCLG analyst. One of us said:

> I think there was a space to come in and be a sort of critical friend. But I think wanting to be policy-relevant isn't the same as going along with whatever the government agenda is.

The translations were also deliberately aimed at developing and maintaining relationships (Nord 1997) with DCLG, primarily because 'making a difference' was a personal agenda for all of us. Mainly this manifested in sharing the civil servants' concern for usefulness. In contrast, the representation team deliberately used unusual modes of communication (film, poetry) to disrupt civil servants' expectations – both hoping to communicate better in this way, and also to maintain an arts-based approach in reaction to the perceived dominance of social science norms in the policy research world (see Pahl and Pool, this volume).   As Kate Pahl put it:

> Because I think part of it, in a very intentional way, was I was disrupting modes. By modes I mean ways of representing things. So it was almost a mimetic project…we were mirroring issues around representation in what we gave you [i.e. DCLG]. So we made it harder for you not easier.

In both academia and civil service the concern for being useful was complemented rather than challenged by notions of academic quality. Producing good translations is a way in which individuals prove their worth, and ultimately keep their jobs. For civil service analysts this means providing reliable and useful information in a 'marketplace' crowded with sources. For academics it is partly about producing highly-rated articles and being seen to have impact, although in contrast to Smith's findings (2010) in the health policy sector these were secondary functions. Their primary commitment was to creating and re-producing research which would 'make a difference' – which goes beyond simply being useful to include promoting change. Yet being overtly political is problematic in the civil service context (Civil Service 2010) and another of the analysts' translatorial tasks is thus to depoliticise academics' messages – not necessarily to exclude innovation (*pace* Smith 2013) but to make potentially challenging new ideas palatable:

> Ministers or policymakers…are interested in, you know, the key succinct messages and why it's relevant … OK, if you [academics] want to rail against [their] philosophy you can do but then you've got to understand that you're not going to have that influence.

The context for situated practice

Here we consider further how the DCLG and academic environments shaped the process of translation. The closest thing to Toury's 'formal rules' is the Civil Service Code, which requires a "commitment to the Civil Service and its core values: integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality" (Civil Service 2010: 1) and excludes the influence of personal or party politics. The Code is highly respected and regarded but underlain by assumptions of the objectivity of evidence and the possibility of impartiality, and hence assumes 'invisible' translators. However, if translators are necessarily and actively making choices then adhering to the Code requires constant care and reflexivity. Academia has no corollary to the Code. Peer review and

ethics review enforces some 'quality' norms on some academic outputs, but in general academics' daily lives are much freer.

In contrast, the domains are similar in the importance of reward and sanction structures, enforced through performance management processes. Individual civil servants must deliver in accordance with objectives which are explicitly linked to departmental and ministerial goals and priorities. Academics have publishing and funding targets, and therein lies some of the importance of the relationship-building functions of translation work 'for' government – it often leads to another grant application and further research. This can create competition: in our policy briefing teams we were conscious of the others as competitors for the prizes of relationships with DCLG and future work. These contexts are dynamic, yet this crucial aspect is largely absent from translation studies, and indeed from much policy science. While Stoker's notion of policy rhythms (2013) begins to address this, there is much more going on. Long-term policy drifts – for instance towards service integration or governance decentralisation – are superimposed on electoral and budgeting cycles. At even shorter timescales, weekly rounds of questions to ministers in Parliament create unpredictable workloads. Academic cycles are perhaps more predictable: demands for outputs (articles and 'impact statements') are highly structured by the Research Excellence Framework[2], while internal workloads follow annual, termly and weekly cycles. Again, however, the interactions of these are unpredictable, vary between institutions, and are overlain by the more linear timelines of research projects and publishing, and even longer trends in research fashions.

Modes of communication

The key issue here is the extent to which an intended communication actually communicates – whether it *will* be read at all, and whether it *can* be 'understood'. In practice this is complicated, and we illustrate it here through the key outputs from two of the policy briefings (Connelly *et al.* 2013; Richardson and Durose 2013) . These projects were unusual in that although they were funded by the AHRC there was significant DCLG input. At the inception meeting attempts were made to agree what and who the outputs were principally for, and what format was preferred, and DCLG positioned itself as the primary audience. Their expectation was a report with two summaries - described by the meeting's chair as a 1:4:20-page format. In contrast to the other teams, Pahl (in line with how she describes her position above, and see Pahl and Pool) explicitly rejected this and appealed to the AHRC's involvement to justify using more unfamiliar and arts-practice-based modes of reporting. Modal choice was thus woven into an enduring pattern of relationships between DCLG and the three teams, with Pahl and her colleagues much less engaged with their policy (as opposed to AHRC) audience throughout. (It should be noted, however, that none of the teams produced a 1:4:20 report, and some members of each went on to work closely with DCLG on *Translation Across Borders*.)

The briefings produced ideas which clearly had relevance and potentially broad use for DCLG: that communities represent themselves in ways which are not conventionally political (Connelly *et al.* 2013); and that accountability within localism can be understood in five different ways, which can be used both heuristically and normatively to promote community control (Richardson and Durose 2013). They were explicitly normative as well as analytic, presenting frameworks through which the academics thought DCLG could and should understand their concerns and practice – frameworks which promote a particular, participatory democratic, politics. Yet the two outputs had very different fates within DCLG. A table of accountability models from the five-page summary section of Richardson and Durose's 2:5:58-page format report was enthusiastically embraced, reproduced and re-used. The representation team produced a 33-

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[2] The UK's national system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions.

page report (without a summary, although the introduction does include an "Outline of the core argument" (Connelly *et al.* 2013: 1)) and a DVD of a set of short films which included a youth group representing their crime and safety concerns through shadow puppets and one made in an artistic community in Troyeville, Johannesburg. None were taken up by DCLG, and as a result the ideas, the cognitive content, failed to permeate across the border and change DCLG practice.

We suggest that while the content of each was equally relevant, and equally challenging, at least part of the explanation lies in Kress's other communicative dimensions. Design was clearly crucial. Success came from clarity and simplicity. A summary text organised in tabular form was *relatively* easy to comprehend, with clear implications, and could also be easily reproduced as a single slide (without Richardson and Durose's accompanying 64 pages) eliminating the need for much further translation – although comments have also been made about its academic-text-heaviness, and the consequent need to 'talk it through'. Generally, though, the table fits with anticipated, known, and acceptable ways of presenting information. In contrast, films with little commentary require interpretation, which in turn require a combination of time and prior insight which the analysts did not have. Primarily what the films achieved was to represent the views of a youth group and evidence of the value of arts in urban regeneration to DCLG rather than provide a usable narrative on how to consider representation differently. The accompanying report was less opaque, though dense and academic in style, and equally demanded time to comprehend and further work to translate into something useful for policy teams.

The material nature of the outputs played a role in reinforcing these differences in design.   Commonly-used formats – PDFs, Word and PowerPoint files - made for easy access to the reports, and in particular the extraction of the key table. The DVD containing films was unfamiliar, requiring a different approach to access and use its content.

Such shortcomings could perhaps have been overcome by a different approach to communicative practice. During and following the projects Durose and Richardson were in frequent contact with DCLG. This opened opportunities not just for aligning their projects' outputs with DCLG's needs, but also to actively promote them in successful exercises in policy entrepreneurship. In contrast there was virtually no dialogue between the representation team and DCLG once the project started. The exception was at a seminar at which draft findings were presented: the opportunity to show and talk about the films (prefaced by a poem!) opened up a conversation between academics and civil servants which built new relationships and led to the current project.

Running through the above is a common thread. Ease of access – ideally enhanced by dialogue – is key to acceptability and utility. This is far more than simply an issue of the language used, though that is important. Time is again a significant factor. For analysts and policy teams alike there is a premium on being able to extract relevant information quickly – as one policy team member said 'we're not thick - I read at 10 p.m. on the train home, that's the test'. This is not identical to either familiarity or the legitimacy of one kind of data over another. While the policy briefings might suggest that unusual visual communication is likely to be less successful than text, the current success of infographics – mixing graphic design with text and numbers - within the civil service tells a different story. Accessibility is the key, achieved through a mix of content and design, coupled with dialogue that presents opportunities for clarification and interpretation. The contrast is clear in this final quotation from one of the analysts:

> "Poems I'm not sure about… it comes down to getting across really clear, really simple messages. You'll have seen our infographics work you know, they're quite deceptive actually; they look simple but underpinning them is a huge amount of intelligence and thought and analysis. And actually what gets presented in that again it's just the tip of the iceberg."

Conclusions

As we suggested at the outset of the chapter, amongst the many aspects of the restructuring and rescaling of citizen/state relationships is the need for new knowledge to address the political challenges posed by post-regeneration policies at the neighbourhood level. Under the twin pressures towards academic impact and evidence-based policy making the onus is largely on academics to change their practices and become more societally useful. We argue that while this opens opportunities for (at least some) academics, it also requires a sophisticated understanding of the longstanding barriers to government's effective use of academic research.

Conceptualising research 'uptake' as practices of translation seems fruitful: the creation of useful meaning from a source text captures much of what is going on, compared to the idea of the simple transfer of research-based knowledge ('evidence') from one domain to another. The humanities discipline of translation studies has much to offer in the detail of its analysis, in particular drawing attention to translation as a social act and the significance of the translation of meaning rather than just content. For us, though, the fundamental issue is the function of translation, and the possible conflicts between differing functions. We have found that the possibility, and likelihood, of effective translation of academic research depends on whether an analyst – or more rarely an academic - can translate a research 'output' to make it useful to the policy teams and politician. Such translation is a complex, skilled process of recognising content, making sense of it in DCLG's own terms, judging what is useful, and knowing how to convert it into something useful to others, within the resources available.

This process is influenced by a range of institutional and communicative factors in both academic and government spheres. In consequence these environments are multidimensional and dynamic – 'complex' in the sense of being created by interactions of different systems (Goodwin 1994). They thus contains elements of both predictability and unpredictability, in ways which we suggest are more challenging to engage with than the more one-dimensional cycles and rhythms of policy theory.

Given the formidable boundaries posed by these factors, is better, more effective translation possible? Clearly Flinders' 'speaking in human' would be a useful step, though not in itself sufficient. Better understanding of the processes in each domain would also help, though again only partially. Detailed knowledge of the complexity of these contexts and practices would require something like an ethnographic approach – embedding an academic researcher in government and vice versa - but the usefulness of this would be hampered by variation across organisations and the rapidity of change. Further, much of the requisite knowledge is know-how and the capacity for situated judgement – both very inaccessible to an outsider researcher and hard to communicate on to non-participants in the research.

We suggest that a solution may lie in a particular way of coproducing knowledge across the border between the academic and policy analyst domains. Researching together does not lead unproblematically to the creation of shared knowledge (Orr and Bennett 2012) – institutional differences are real and cannot be wished away. Even if a new identity could be created in which researchers and users shared enough to remove the boundaries between them, this would inevitably create new borders, across which they would have to translate 'back' to their respective domains.

Rather what we suggest is collaboration around translation. This shifts the emphasis to explicitly recognising the existence of borders between domains with different cultures, languages and needs, and the necessity for translators to actively reinterpret and recreate 'research' in order to move it across these borders. Such recognition is potentially challenging, to both academics' care for the quality of their research, and civil service emphases on the neutrality and objectivity of evidence. It is also challenging in practice – as we are finding in the *Translation Across Borders* project. It requires communication to establish mutual

understanding of the needs of the three domains – academic, analyst and policy – in order that practices can be developed which better align with all of these. This is easier said than done, mitigated against by academic and civil service career pressures, the need for time and nurturing to develop trust, misalignment of the timescales of change in each domain, and simply because the primary functions and values of the academy and civil service may be hard to align. There must also be a willingness to engage in this way, and we were fortunate that the civil servants in DCLG shared our interest in exploring these issues. We recognise that the possibilities for such working almost certainly vary greatly across the civil service. Yet it is not impossible. Further research is needed to understand how successful translation is achieved, where usefulness has combined with fidelity to the original research, and to understand better what institutional changes and techniques would support academics seeking to have their work understood by a policy audience.

So we are not arguing for the dissolving of borders, and so the removal of the complex processes of translation. This would be both undesirable and impossible. Rather we suggest the importance of recognising the need for and possibility of collaboration – of dialogue and meaning creation across borders. The necessary commonality is not one of culture but of mutual respect and the sense of a shared endeavour, jointly oriented towards a common understanding of usefulness as at least one of the principle functions of the translation of research.

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