

Knowledge Brokers, Entrepreneurs and Markets

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The rise of the knowledge broker

“Knowledge brokers are people or organizations that move knowledge around and create connections between researchers and their various audiences” (Meyer, 2010)

Multiple locations

Multiple activities

Translation and transversality - collective and interactive

Variations in visibility and movement

“Brokered knowledge is knowledge made more robust, more usable.. That ‘serves locally’ at a given time...de-and re-assembled.” (Meyer)

Some empirical data

- **‘Social Sciences & Humanities (SSH) Futures’ Project, EU-funded, 2006 - 2009**

- **Eight European Countries + Israel**

“The project will examine the institutions in which social science and humanities knowledge is produced, the methods applied to produce knowledge, the dissemination of this knowledge and the expectations from both the side of the ‘producers’ and that of the (potential) ‘users’ at the national, European and international levels.”

- **Drew on an electronic survey of 1655 active researchers* (in January & February 2008) and interviews with 85 stakeholders (14 UK, interviewed at end of 2007)**

** 32% of 5343 sample - UK respondents 56% Soc Sci and 34% Humanities*

The 14 UK interviewees

- Recent Academic 5 Policy / Practice 9
- Government 6 Non-government 8
- Public sector 11 Private 3
- National 10 Sub-national 4
- Research Commissioners / Funders 9
- Social Science background 10
 - Humanities background 1 Neither 3
- Male 10 Female 4

Stakeholders as brokers (4/14)

- *“though I know brokerage is a five-years ago kind of metaphor, but it does describe the kind of things we do”* (KT organisation)
- *“My team is a team of brokers.. Because we are all ex-academics and ex-researchers, we understand the need for the researchers to be independent ..(but) we need them to engage with us all the way along.”* ... (Public sector research director)
- *“At the moment, we work in an R&D department, headed by a scientist, we are scientists, we talk to each other, we broker...”*
- *“we were invented as a kind of broker or knowledge transfer organisation... an unprecedented kind of organisation in the UK....(KT organisation)*

Stakeholders' Role Constructions

- *“....I felt my role was not just to provide for the immediate parochial needs of ministers and senior civil servants, but also to make sure that any future government that might come along.....would have the kind of data and information and resources and skills to rely on to make a policy.”* (former civil servant)
- *“Its vital that we engage in advocacy.”* (Funding agency head)
- *“We are a strange breed of people, who have moved off academic research – we now manage research and commission it.”* (Public sector research director)
- *“My team is a team of brokers”* (Public sector research director)
- *“We are an intelligent customer in that area between the researcher and policy-maker”* (Civil servant)
- *“If we didn't have brokers, (the researchers) would find themselves forced to go native. We protect them from the pressures...we have to be very tough”* (Civil servant)

Stakeholders' Role Constructions

- *“I see my role as being to challenge the simplistic answer...(to say) yes, but there’s some scientific evidence here to the contrary and you need to be rather careful about rushing down that route”* (Devolved administration)
- *“What we liked to do was to work around the edges (of the academic system)”*. (Parliamentary adviser)
- *It’s called communicating with impact, it’s one of our competences”* (Public sector Research Director)
- *“We do see our role as ...kind of the keepers, guardians of the evidence base, and therefore would resist any attempts at manipulation.* (Devolved administration)
- *“I can see that there are bits of translation that we are doing there but it feels to me much more that we are getting these people together and trying to see what they have to say to each other.”* (KT organisation)

Stakeholders' Role Constructions

- Informed advisors
- Commissioners
- Intelligent customers
- Co-producers
- Guardians
- Advocates
- Communicators
- Translators
- Brokers
- Intermediaries

Contrasting views of knowledge movement

- *“If I was to organise a meeting with a Minister and bring in a professor...I don’t want (her) to start every sentence with , on the one hand, on the other....because in five minutes you have lost the Minister and the Minister is looking at her or his watch and you’ve lost the debate” (Civil servant)*
- *“...Well known academics, I have had them coming in here, and we have only got an hour, these busy policy people come along, they’re going to tell you the results of their really important study and then they spend the first three quarters of an hour (talking) about the methodology.....you do despair sometimes” (Devolved administration)*
- *“I can see that there are bits of translation that we are doing there but it feels to me much more that we are getting these people together and trying to see what they have to say to each other. (KT organisation)”*
- *“We want to get academics themselves engaged in the process. Academics are intelligent and adaptable, as are the institutions that employ them, by and large. (Funding agency)”*

Contrasting views of knowledge movement

Involving knowledge producers

- Direct Communication
- Assisted Communication
- Engagement

Distancing knowledge producers

- Brokerage
- Translation
- Co-production & Exchange

SSK in a marketplace

“It’s clear they take advice from a variety of sources, many of which ...you’ve kind of got no control over... ...their mates or someone they trusted before...so I don’t want to present an overly-rationalist world in which they think, ‘knowledge about society, we will go to the social scientists’ (KT organisation)

“Policy is not only a social science question” (Funding agency)

There’s a market for knowledge in our area that wasn’t there before and we have been part of that ... A huge market has developed for survey work ”

“Science is just one of (the) sources of evidence” (Devolved administration)

“What the legal people are telling him, what the social scientists are telling him, what the economists are telling him... and what the pure political necessities of the job are forcing him to do”. (Civil servant)

More about the market

“You will know from the literature that research (knowledge) comes very low down the pecking order in terms of the forensic sorts of evidence that policymakers want to hear... it (also) comes well behind what their special advisers tell them , what their constituents supply and their own gut feelings....There’s a whole range of other sources that (policy makers) will listen to ahead of research and that takes us back to communication.”
(Devolved administration, Research Director)

“Social science issues don’t force themselves onto the news agenda – (social scientists) have to recognise that when you’re working in the media landscape, it’s hard pounding”. (Media expert)

(Some policy people) *“would far rather go to market researchers....market researchers can do it for us tomorrow, they will say fine, I will sign the contract tomorrow..”* (Civil Service Research Director)

European stakeholder headlines

- Convergence of policy and SSK knowledge production – SS more welcome in policy arenas
- Welcomes and concerns
- Communication theme (more linear)
- Pragmatic view of political uptake
- Recognition of increasing speed and variety of knowledge access and exchange

Views of the (SS&H) research producers

- Professional time spent on “services directed beyond the academic world”

None : UK 31% All 24%

>20 % UK 63% All 67%

21 – 50% UK 6% All 8%

- “Activism or advocacy”

Never UK 56% All 52%

Frequently UK 7% All 5%

- Commentary and Journalism

Never UK 12% All 12%

Frequently UK 21% All 25%

+ *Minimal free text references to KT, exchange, engagement, Mode 2 language*

[Source : SSHF Futures WP2 Report]

- Importance of applied research

Very UK 40% All 43%

Not at all UK 12% All 7%

- Impact on societal development as motivation for current research ?

Strongly agree UK 43% All 32%

Strongly disagree UK 6% All 11%

- ‘Very Important’ audiences

Government UK 47% All 26%

Public Agencies UK 27% All 18%

Civil Society UK 27% All 11%

Citizens UK 26% All 16%

Industry UK 4% All 3%

Production and Reconstruction in the Marketplace

- Gaps between responses and ‘grand narratives’
- Autonomy is still academic goal
- Hesitant knowledge producers
- Absence of research interactions
- SSK take up is reconstructed, contingent and political
- Knowledge competition is nothing new (Lindblom & Cohen, 1976)
- **Now shaped by rapidly changing (and highly competitive) knowledge markets**

Knowledge brokerage revisited

- **Knowledge is produced and then brokered**
- **Multiple (heroic) capacities**
- **Producers and users actively seeking brokerage**
- **Knowledge value neutrality**
- **There are gaps to be bridged by a new professional elite**
- **Modified linearity (modified romanticism) (Woolgar, 2004)**
- **Thin conceptions of trade and markets**

Knowledge moves in mysterious ways....

- **Context is important – locational, institutional and circumstantial variations**
- *“Social science ..may relate to the policy process at a number of different points and in a number of different ways”*
- *“Contingent and political nature of take up of social science research”* (Brannen, 1986)

Knowledge markets and actors

- **These complicated and multilayered knowledge movements make most sense in a market framework**
- *“Constitutive marketing of ideas”* (Woolgar)
- **BUT most boundaries still in place – little sign of transgressing or of the agora**
(Nowotny et al, 2001)
- **Hence space for brokers and trading**
(Osborne, 2004) **co-production, innovation and entrepreneurship** (Mintrom, 1997, Rowley, 2000)

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Thanks for your attention

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