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Knowledge, policy and power in international development: a practical guide

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Analysing the knowledge-policy interface:



Which tools should we use, and where are they?



Will our toolkit ever look like this?

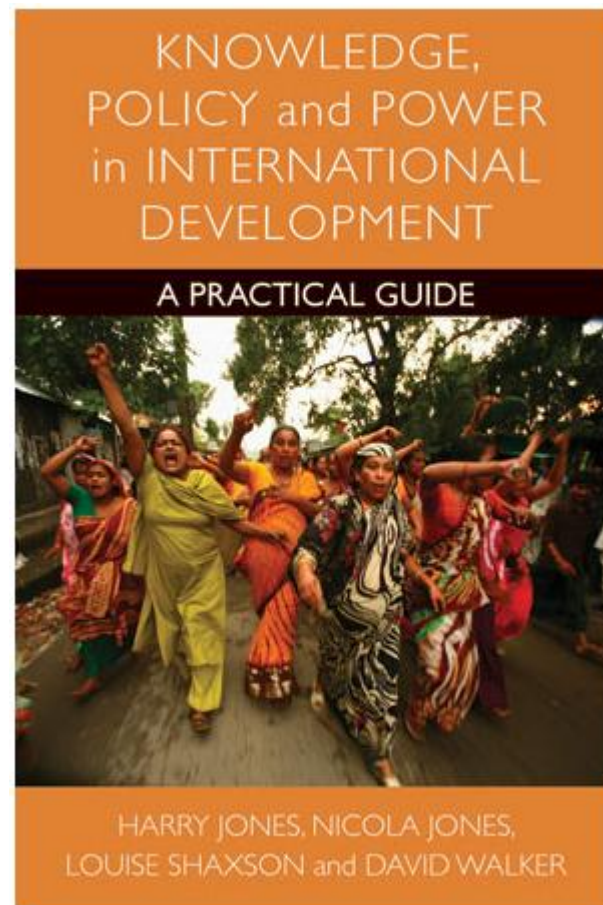


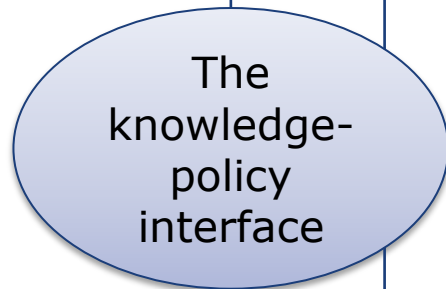


A practical guide

Not another model of the knowledge-policy interface

Four axes for analysis:
a practical guide to how knowledge, policy and power interact to promote or prevent change





What is the **political context**? Who has the strongest voices in policy debates? What checks and balances are in place to ensure that weaker voices can be heard?

How do the interests of the various **actors** coincide or conflict with each other? Are there strongly held values and belief systems which affect this? Who is seen as credible in policy debates?

Which **types of knowledge** are used in policy debates? Considering research knowledge, citizen knowledge and implementation knowledge; is one type dominant?

Are there any **intermediaries** – organisations or individuals – which specifically work across the interface between knowledge and policy? Where are they situated, how do they work and what effect do they have?



It's not just about political will:

- Who has the strongest voice in policy debates, and why?
 - Types of power restraint
 - Regulation and competitiveness of political participation
 - Informal politics
 - External forces
 - Capacities to absorb change
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People and organisations sometimes act counter to their own self-interest

- Who is involved in policymaking processes?
 - How do their interests, values, beliefs and credibility of all the actors shape each other, and the knowledge-policy interface?
 - Using knowledge
 - Brokering knowledge
 - Producing and codifying knowledge
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Types of knowledge

There are three main types of knowledge *for policy*

- What sources of knowledge do different actors rely on, and why?
 - How do power relations between actors serve as a filter for privileging some types of knowledge over others?
 - Research-based knowledge (e.g. climate science)
 - Practice-informed knowledge (e.g. what works in microfinance?)
 - Citizen knowledge (e.g. participatory governance assessments: what did 'peace' mean for them?)
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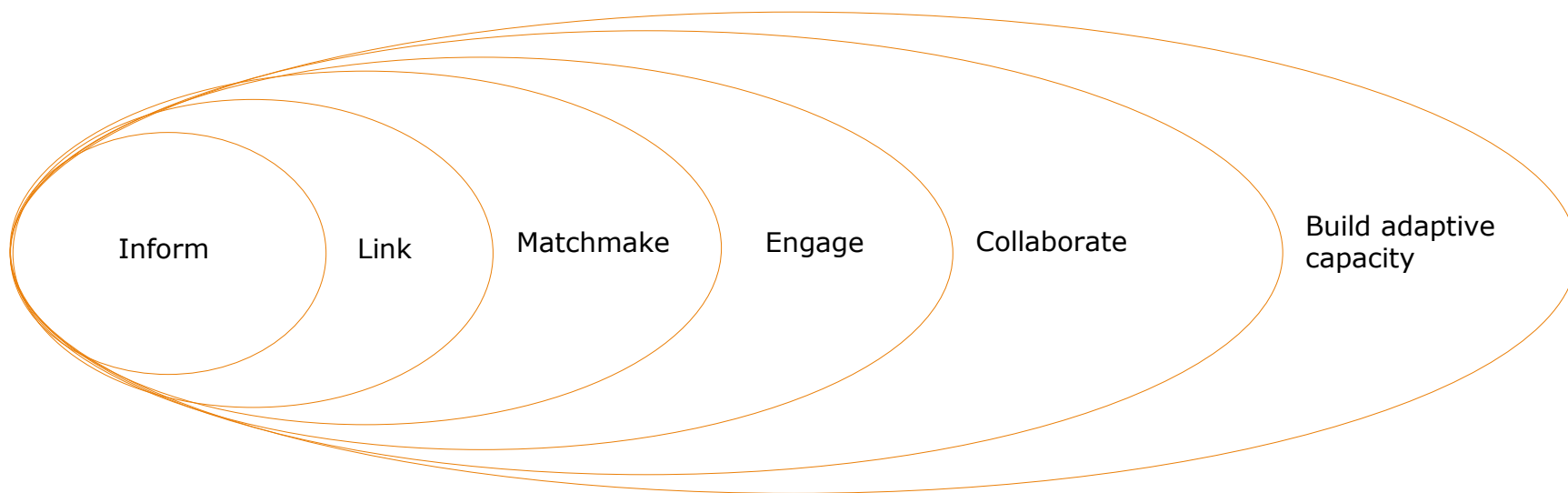
Knowledge intermediaries

You don't have to be badged as a knowledge intermediary to act as one

- How do we decide how best to behave as a knowledge intermediary?
 - Focus on the function, not the form of the intermediary
 - How do organisational and system factors shape knowledge interaction processes?
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Six intermediary functions



Linear dissemination of knowledge from producer to user



Co-production of knowledge, social learning & innovation



This is what it means to do your homework well:

- It's not all down to political will: mapping the political context helps identify potential entry points and veto players
 - But don't assume that all actors act in their own self-interest: values, beliefs and credibility shape how actors act
 - Knowledge for policy isn't only 'true, justified belief' – there's an interplay with knowledge about local context and about what's worked
 - Anyone can be a knowledge intermediary: what's important is to understand which function is needed and then work out who's best placed to perform it
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It's not really this tidy, but...





Core messages (2)

- **Knowledge producers:**
 - Don't assume that state typology defines the interface between knowledge and policy
 - Establishing the meaning of a piece of knowledge is conditioned by politics and power dynamics
- **Knowledge users:** as above, plus...
 - You're also an actor in the political economy, not just a passive recipient
 - Use networks to actively seek out and frame knowledge



Core messages (3)

- **Knowledge intermediaries:** as above, plus...
 - Understand how you contribute to social learning
 - There's no such thing as a neutral intermediary
 - **Donors:** as above, plus...
 - It *is* possible to do a systematic analysis of the interface between knowledge and policy...
 - ...which will give real insights into who to support, how to support them and how to assess their impact
 - The next frontier is understanding how to help policymakers and citizens articulate their demands for knowledge in policy
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Thank you

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