

# What kind of evidence?

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Delhi, January 27-28, 2014



# Surface observation: Academic v policy-regulatory evidence

## **Academic**

- Anchored on theory
- Peer review is test
- More complex; more persuasive
- Long
- Contains many provisos and conditions

## **Policy-regulatory**

- Not explicitly anchored on theory
- Defensibility is test
- Simpler the better
- Short
- Tends to be straightforward

## Types of Policy Influence (Lindquist)

<u>Expanding Policy Capacities</u>	<u>Broadening Policy Horizons</u>	<u>Affecting Policy Regimes</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving the knowledge or data of certain actors</li><li>• Supporting recipients to develop innovative ideas</li><li>• Improving capabilities to communicate ideas</li><li>• Developing new talent for research and analysis</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing policy makers with opportunities for networking or learning within their jurisdiction or with colleagues elsewhere</li><li>• Introducing new concepts to frame debates, putting ideas on the agenda, or stimulating public debate</li><li>• Educating researchers and others who take up new positions with a broader understanding of issues</li><li>• Stimulating quiet dialogue among decision-makers (and among, or with, those involved in knowledge production).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modifying existing programs or policies</li><li>• Leading to the fundamental re-design of programs and policies</li><li>• Helping create a new policy regime in an emerging field.</li></ul>

# Keynes on power of vested interests v ideas

- “... the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the natural encroachment of ideas. Not, indeed, immediately, but after a certain interval; for in the field of economic and political philosophy there are not many who are influenced by new theories after they are twenty-five or thirty years of age, so that the ideas which civil servants and politicians and even agitators apply to current events are not likely to be the newest. But soon or late, it is ideas not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil.”

# **CANADIAN COGITATIONS**

# Canada is a well-governed, well-endowed country, yet . . .

- Telecommunications Policy Review Panel (TPRP) was a three-person committee mandated by Canadian Minister of Industry in 2005 to review Canada's telecommunications framework
- Included in the TPRP's final report was the observation that, in Canada, a "relative paucity of academic work on what has been referred to as the 'regulatory craft'" has led to "heavy reliance on foreign (mostly U.S.-based) experts on economic, technical and even social regulation".

# And the recommendation . . .

- It is time, the report suggested, for “more and better policy research and analysis ... to keep Canadian telecommunications and ICT policy and regulation at the forefront of ICT developments”

# Demand-side or supply-side problem?

- “Only a handful of submissions to the panel relied on research undertaken by Canadians. Not many submissions to the panel were made by researchers as stand-alone participants.”
  - 2 of 109 submissions to TPRP’s first round of submissions, and 2 of 89 submissions to the TPRP’s second round, for a total of 3 of 198, were from “educational institutions”. Adding to these the individual submissions of 4 academics in the first round, and 2 in the second round, suggests that academics were responsible for 4.5 percent of submissions to the study panel.



# What communication policy researchers in Canada are interested in studying

- Relative merits of Canadian content
- Universal access to communication networks and technologies
- The CBC's public broadcasting mandate
- Future, development & protection of Canadian screen, music, and other cultural (or “creative”) industries.
- Social movements around communication issues
- Intellectual property, especially copyright

# Demand is said to be for research on . .

- Network neutrality
- Copyright issues
- Access programs
  
- No research on
  - Co-regulation/self-regulation & accountability

# Did supply match demand?

- Evidence that most people who study communication issues in Canada
  - Are actually in a field called cultural studies that seeks to engage in an “epic struggle for consciousness” rather than “tinkering with practical arrangements”
    - Or, on the critical side of the critical/administrative divide → by definition not likely to dirty their hands with policy
  - Include few/no economists and engineers
  - Make little or no use of quantitative methods, or marshal evidence in a systematic way

# Should there be compulsions on the demanders?

- Challenging the “marketplace of ideas” assumption that those with something useful to say will muster the needed time and resources suggestion that there be a legal requirement for government agencies to conduct literature searches, in addition to the current power to order operators to pay costs of certain intervenors
  - Runs counter to the fact that supply of policy-relevant research in Canada does not seem to match demand

# Another suggestion, a good one this time . . .

- Raw data needed for policy-relevant research is difficult to get
  - Under the control of policy/regulatory agencies or of operators
- Law should make it obligatory that raw data in usable form be made public
  - Unlike in the old days of paper, all that is required is making available on the web

# **AMERICAN ANALYSIS**

# Modes by which research & ideas enter the policy process

- Research emanating from academia, think tanks, associations, industry research laboratories, public interest groups, and independent writers
- Background studies commissioned by government or other stakeholders (e.g., the 12 studies commissioned by FCC in the context of media ownership proceeding)
- Research conducted under consulting arrangements introduced during specific proceedings by specific stakeholders
- Expert testimony in regulatory and court proceedings
- Lobbying activities
- Public relations activities (e.g., op eds, TV commentary)
- Media coverage

# Ideas in policy process

## **Stages of policy process**

- Agenda setting
- Policy formulation
- Policy adoption
- Policy implementation
- Policy evaluation
- Policy modification (or policy termination)

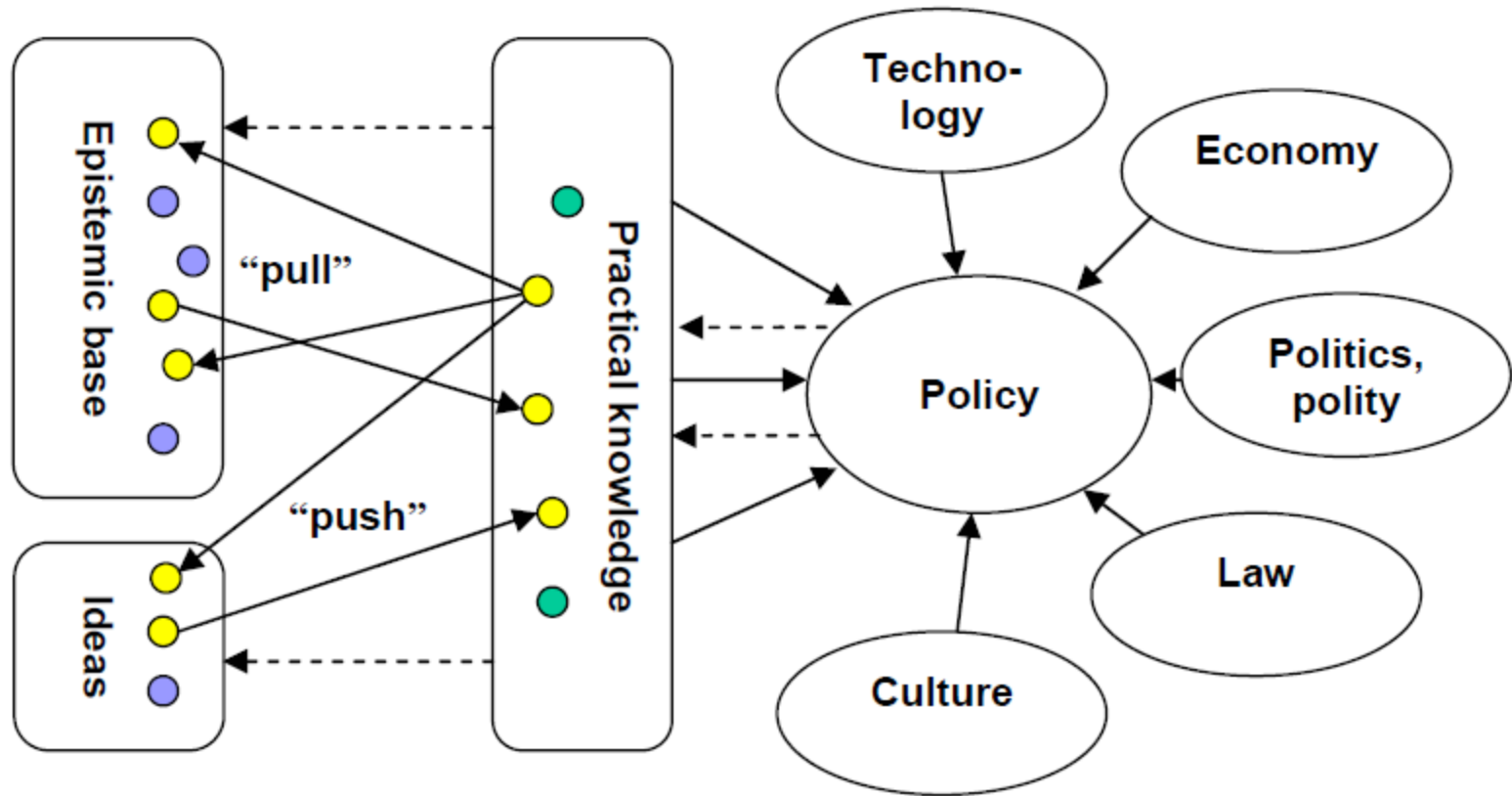
## **Role of ideas**

- Research and ideas play a role at all these stages
- General frames are more important in earlier stages and at mid-level
- Operational ideas are relatively more important at later stages



Figure 1

Stylized relations between knowledge, ideas and policy



Inspired by Mokyr (2002).

# Mismatched incentives in academia

- “In the academy it is evident that policy-oriented, applied research is less prestigious than theoretical work. This is even more the case for outreach and work with policymakers, which is generally not valued as highly as publications in refereed journals. Thus, the incentives in the academy are presently in conflict with the conditions of transferring research systematically to the policymaking arena.”

# Who will effectively link research and policy?

- Reflective practitioners?
  - Within government (with the aura of the “public interest”)?
  - Within private stakeholders (transcending special interest and perceptions of bias)?
- Specialized idea brokers
  - Such as think tanks?
  - But what of hostility toward think tanks?
- Policy-engaged academics?
  - Do they have to remain in academia (e.g., Bauer), go back and forth (e.g., Farber, Faulhaber), or not return ( e.g., Lallana, Samarajiva)?

**WINDOWS.**  
**WITH ONE BIG DIFFERENCE.**

**OUR WINDOWS INCLUDE PATCHING & MONITORING.**

**STOP CHASING SERVERS AND START EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES.**

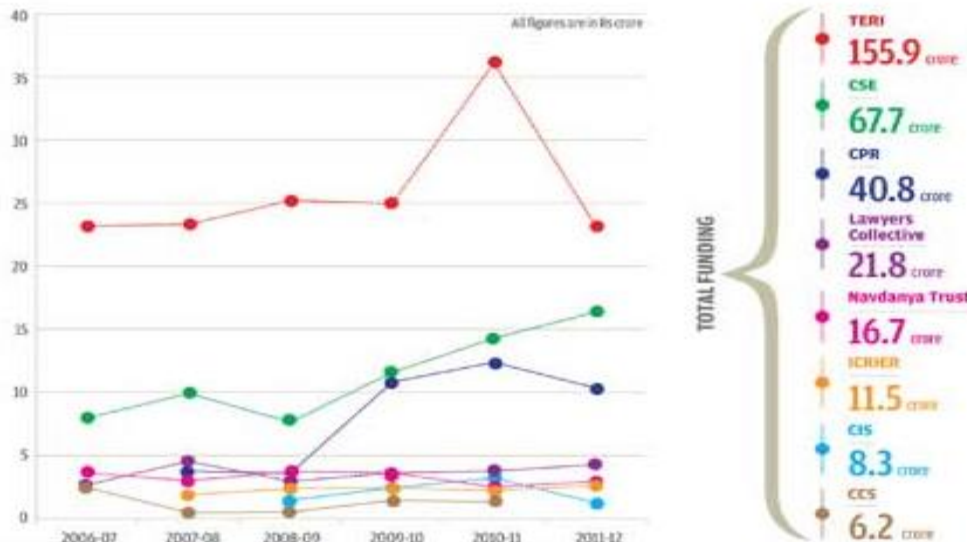
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<p><b>155.9 crore</b></p> <p><b>The Energy Research Institute (TERI)</b></p> <p><b>Funded by, among others:</b> Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation/Institute of Biotechnology/Health Effects Institute/Trading Emission PLC/Toyota/Pepsi/Coca-Cola/Dow Chemicals/Boeing India/Climate Works Foundation</p>  <p><b>RK Pachauri</b> director general, TERI</p>	<p><b>67.7 crore</b></p> <p><b>Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)</b></p> <p><b>Funded by, among others:</b> Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst EV/Dan Church Aid/Heinrich Ball Foundation/SIDA/European Union/Climate Works Foundation</p>  <p><b>Sunita Narain</b> director general, CSE</p>	<p><b>40.8 crore</b></p> <p><b>Centre for Policy Research (CPR)</b></p> <p><b>Funded by, among others:</b> Ford Foundation/Google Foundation/American Political Science Association/KEA Social Initiative/DFID UK</p>  <p><b>Pratap Shyam Mehta</b> president, CPR</p>	<p><b>21.8 crore</b></p> <p><b>Lawyers Collective</b></p> <p><b>Funded by, among others:</b> Ford Foundation/Levi Strauss Foundation/Open Society/Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids/Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</p>  <p><b>Indira Jaising</b> founder, Lawyers Collective</p>
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<p><b>16.7 crore</b></p> <p><b>Navdanya Trust</b></p> <p><b>Funded by, among others:</b> Bread for the World/Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst e.v./European Union/Ilivos Foundation/Diakonie Emergency Aid/RSF innovations in Social Finance/Wallace Global Fund</p>  <p><b>Vandana Shiva</b> founder, Navdanya</p>	<p><b>11.5 crore</b></p> <p><b>Indian Council For Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER)</b></p> <p><b>Funded by, among others:</b> Asian Development Bank/Sasakawa Peace Foundation/World Bank/International Monetary Fund/AIG/OECD</p>  <p><b>Isher Judge Ahluwalia</b> former director and now chairperson, ICRIER</p>	<p><b>8.3 crore</b></p> <p><b>Centre for Internet and Society (CIS)</b></p> <p><b>Funded by, among others:</b> Kusuma Trust/The Wikimedia Foundation/Privacy International/The Hans Foundation</p>  <p><b>Sanil Abraham</b> executive director, CIS</p>	<p><b>6.2 crore</b></p> <p><b>Centre for Civil Society (CCS)</b></p> <p><b>Funded by, among others:</b> Atlas Economic Research Foundation/John Templeton Foundation/International Policy Network</p>  <p><b>Parth J Shah</b> president, CCS</p>
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**EUROPEAN ANGST**

# Purpose of EuroCPR

- Match the telecommunication policy research effort in the US by developing a European research capability, in part to avoid simply importing US regulatory models and their accompanying politico-cultural ideological assumptions.
- Also to bring that capability into a dialogue with policy makers with the objective of ensuring a more rational policy-making process with policy based upon the best available evidence and dispassionate analysis, rather than the crude interplay of economic and political interests.

# Garnham's lament

- Objectives were not achieved
- Silly to have thought they could be achieved  
→ hubris
- Academics have vested interests too, etc., etc.

# Unrealistic expectations

- “Second, as in the telecommunication/ dot.com bust, you can have too much innovation and the process can then lead to serious overshoot and over investment. In this case no innovator can establish the monopoly rents required to make the process profitable and consumers suffer because all investment is taken from current consumption, as a bet on the future.”
- Unaware of how most infrastructure gets built?
  - E.g., Channel Tunnel going bankrupt, Suez and Panama



# **MELODY'S MESSAGE**

# Imperfect markets; imperfect policy

- With limited knowledge, bounded rationality, and a significant degree of uncertainty, contested markets are the best place to decide issues of resource allocation and economic efficiency. The overriding objective of policy here is to maintain a structure and process for the functioning of markets, not to determine or predict the results. The best results are unpredictable and likely to come from open, contested markets. They are characterised by contradictions and to outside observers apparent confusion.

# Muddling through with imperfect policy-relevant research

“Imperfect policy research can inform imperfect policy development to shape imperfect markets to align more closely to public interest goals [**what are they?**]. The imperfections in markets can only be mitigated by effective policy and regulation [**as judged by whom and how?**]. The imperfections in policy and regulation can only be mitigated [**how much is enough?**] by better information and knowledge generated from research [**as judged by?**]. This is the continuing formidable challenge to the research community in the years ahead [**how do we know whether met?**].”

# **COMPLEXITY AND COMMUNICATION**

# Steinmuller

- “It is not that the theorists have got it wrong; it is that the only theorists being given the stage are those who are willing to subscribe to a simplistic and technological determinist vision of the immanence and benefits of information society developments. Those with more measured or complex views are left to pursue their academic musings with their students.”

# Bauer

- “The multiple and complicated relations in a social system cannot be understood or communicated easily. It is therefore tempting, particularly in the context of policy making, to simplify to the point of myths and to exaggerate the problem-solving capacity of policy. With the exception of scholars arguing from an institutional perspective, academics, experts and advisers bear their share in this grand over-simplification, which became the new shared mental model for the organisation of ICT.”

# **CONDITIONS FOR KNOWLEDGE BECOMING RELEVANT EVIDENCE**

# Timeliness

- When the policy window opens, the evidence must be provided
  - Academics are wary about “half-baked” conclusions
  - There is a view that only peer-reviewed evidence should be admitted



# Veracity

- The test of policy evidence is stakeholder acceptance
  - Massive interests at stake, in some cases, the very existence of enterprises
  - So when one participates in high-stakes policy processes, one should expect intense testing
    - Single error may mark one for life

# The grad student who exposed Reinhart and Rogoff: They still can't get their facts straight



By Shaheen Pasha | April 29, 2013

Shaheen Pasha teaches journalism at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. She has been a reporter for Reuters, CNN and the Wall Street Journal, and has previously reported from Dubai and Cairo.



# Credibility

- Aristotle's ethos, e.g.,
  - Recognition of expertise by others
    - Role of conferences and international events
    - Media profile
  - University > not university
  - Harvard > U Mass
  - PhD > no PhD
  - Track record

# Effective communication

- Ethos-pathos-logos